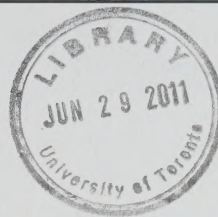


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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 2, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 1, 2011

Printed by the Stationery Office

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 2, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

FIRST SESSION—41ST PARLIAMENT

The 40th Parliament having been dissolved by proclamation on Saturday, March 26, 2011, and writs having been issued and returned, a new Parliament was summoned to meet for the dispatch of business on Thursday, June 2, 2011, and did so accordingly meet on that day.

Thursday, June 2, 2011

This being the day on which Parliament was convoked by proclamation of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada for the dispatch of business, and the members of the House being assembled:

Audrey O'Brien, Clerk of the House of Commons, read to the House a letter from the Secretary to the Governor General informing her that the Deputy Governor General would proceed to the Senate chamber today at 11 o'clock to open the first session of the 41st Parliament of Canada.

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Honourable Members of the House of Commons:

It is the desire of the Right Honourable Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General, that this Honourable House attend her immediately in the Senate chamber.

Accordingly the House went up to the Senate chamber, where the Speaker of the Senate said:

Honourable Members of the Senate, Members of the House of Commons:

I have it in command to let you know that His Excellency the Governor General of Canada does not see fit to declare the causes of his summoning the present Parliament of Canada until a Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen, according to law; but tomorrow afternoon, Friday, June 3, at the hour of three o'clock His Excellency will declare the causes of him calling Parliament.

• (1105)

[Translation]

And the House being returned to the Commons chamber:

The Clerk of the House: Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 3, I invite Mr. Louis Plamondon, member for the electoral district of Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, to take the chair and preside over the election of a Speaker.

• (1125)

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Dear friends, this is the second time that I have had the opportunity to sit in this prestigious chair, and I must admit that I am starting to enjoy it.

Allow me to congratulate all of you on your election to the House of Commons. As I sit in this prestigious chair, I would like to acknowledge my constituents in my riding of Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, who placed their trust in me for the ninth time this past election. I had always been able to ride the wave, but this time the wave was coming right at me. I found it different, but tiring.

I would also like to acknowledge my companion Manon, who has always supported me, my children, Catherine and Lucie, as well as my grandchildren. I also thank my election committee, which was a huge help in this election. Let us begin.

[English]

The list of members who have withdrawn or who are ineligible as candidates has been placed on each member's desk and is available at the table.

[Translation]

The list of those members who are eligible as candidates has also been placed on each member's desk and is available at the table.

[English]

Before we begin, I want to invite any member whose name is on the list of candidates but who does not want to stand for election to rise and inform the Chair accordingly.

The hon. member for Papineau.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Irrespective of my written efforts to decline the opportunity to become speaker, fate has decreed, with a little help from Canada Post, that I must consider it. Therefore, consider it I have.

[Translation]

Despite my desire to have what may be a better seat in the House, I am making the difficult decision to decline. I would have liked to see a francophone included on this list. However, I must withdraw my candidacy for the honour of being Speaker of the House.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): You had five minutes, maximum.

[English]

Following that statement, the list of candidates is revised.

Election of Speaker

Pursuant to Standing Order 3.1, the House must proceed to the speeches from each candidate for the office of the Speaker.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Notwithstanding any Standing Order or any procedure and practice adopted by this House, and to help the newly elected members identify the candidates for the office of Speaker, I will recognize in alphabetical order each candidate by name and by electoral district.

[English]

When the last candidate to address the House completes his speech, I will leave the chair for one hour, after which members will proceed to the election of the Speaker.

I will now call upon Mr. Dean Allison, the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Let me begin by offering my sincere congratulations to all my esteemed colleagues on their election to this distinguished place. To those returning, welcome back.

[Translation]

I wish to welcome those who are in this House for the first time.

[English]

The Canadian people have chosen each individual in this room to represent them. With that endorsement comes an incomparable level of duty and responsibility. From coast to coast to coast, Canadians have spoken and expect each of us to work in their best interests by coming together to make this historic 41st Parliament not only work, but also work well.

[Translation]

And that is what we must do.

[English]

We have an opportunity and, indeed, a duty to transcend perfunctory courtesies and bring back to this great chamber a level of honour and respect befitting Canada's House of Commons.

[Translation]

I challenge each of you to consider your role as a member here.

[English]

I would challenge each of you consider not only how you perceive your responsibilities but also how you are perceived by those who have placed their trust in you by giving you the honour and the privilege of working in this hallowed place to the benefit of all Canadians.

By nature and by duty, we are all fiercely loyal to our beliefs and our political leanings, but as individuals and as representatives of our constituents, our conduct should be no less than exemplary. The political composition of this House embodies the great democratic values that are the foundation of Canada. They reflect the many different interests that naturally exist across our great country.

As we work to advance these interests, we must remember that this is not the time for political posturing and self-aggrandizement. The work of this chamber is greater than merely the sum of its parts.

If selected by you to serve as your Speaker, I would uphold the time-honoured traditions of this chamber. I would call for thoughtful discernment and appropriate consultation, and would then execute all the duties of the position to the best of my ability.

As Speaker, I would employ all means within my capacity to maintain the sanctity of this place, especially when it relates to members' decorum. It is ultimately up to each hon. member, however, to make the conscious decision and exercise the appropriate level of professionalism, respect and restraint.

As elected representatives of the Canadian people, we all share the privilege and fundamental right to freedom of speech in this place: the right to speak without fear of barrier, the right to express any opinion or to speak on any matter that we consider to be in the interests of our constituents or the country as a whole.

However, with the right to freedom of speech comes great responsibility, responsibility to our hon. colleagues and, indeed, responsibility to the institution and the rules of the House.

It is the duty of the Speaker to ensure that the right of free speech is protected and exercised to the fullest possible extent. This is accomplished by presiding over debate in the House and interpreting and enforcing all rules and practices. The Speaker is to preserve the order and decorum in the chamber, which is tantamount to the success of Parliament itself.

As members know, the Speaker is also the chief administrative officer of the House and in this capacity requires a cognizant stewardship as well as experience and capacity to execute these duties. As well, the Speaker has the honour to represent Parliament in its relations with persons and authorities outside of this Parliament, and in this capacity the Speaker must succinctly convey the principles, jurisdictions and views held by Parliament.

Hon. members of this place, today I stand before you humbly.

[Translation]

I submitted my candidacy for the office of Speaker because I want the honour of serving you.

• (1135)

[English]

I entered political life over a decade ago with a desire to serve. During my tenure in this place, I have worked diligently on behalf of my constituents. I have served my party, both in opposition and on government benches. I have served the House in the capacity of chair on many committees where, I hope my colleagues will agree, I have always sought to be fair and impartial, and sought consensus among all members. I have always sought and will continue to seek ways to build a better Parliament and a better Canada.

Election of Speaker

I am here to advocate for the support of all members to be selected as Speaker. As Speaker of the House, I will continue to serve members of Parliament and the people of Canada, for this is the primary function of the position.

I have the necessary experience. I have the required talents and abilities.

[Translation]

I wish to serve.

[English]

Now, all I need is the support of the members. Thank you for your consideration

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I now call upon Barry Devolin, the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

You have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): I stand here today as one of eight candidates applying for a job. That means that the other 300-some members of Parliament constitute the hiring committee in this process. In my view, today they bear a significant responsibility to themselves, to one another, and to all Canadians to carefully consider each of the candidates before deciding which one they think would make the best Speaker of this House of Commons.

This is about more than party politics, more than helping a friend, and more than who asked them first. Today, the members will decide as a group who will be offered a four-year non-revocable contract to manage this place and to help steer the ship of Canadian democracy.

In a few minutes, we might hear my colleague, the hon. member for London West, say that experience in business is a big asset for managing the day-to-day operations of this place. I agree with that, which is why my experience as a successful businessman in real estate and running a communications company before I entered politics should be important to members. I know the importance of managing a budget and looking after customers.

I also expect that in a few minutes we might hear my colleague from Calgary Centre suggest that a broad range of life experience is necessary for our Speaker to serve as an ambassador for Canada on a global stage. I could not agree more. As we know, our Speaker stands fifth in the order of precedence and has many ceremonial and diplomatic responsibilities. That is why I place great value in my academic and international background.

I have a bachelor's degree from Carleton University and a master's degree from the State University of New York. I have also lived for a year or more in Europe, the United States and Asia. Collectively, these experiences will be a great asset if I have the opportunity to serve as the Speaker in Canada and abroad.

[Translation]

I expect that in a few moments, my hon. colleague from Victoria will argue that the Speaker of the House should speak both official

languages. She is quite right. I believe that bilingual candidates have a clear advantage. I feel it is a matter of respect for all members of the House.

Six years ago, I could not put together a single sentence in French. Today I consider myself bilingual, perhaps not perfectly bilingual, but I can communicate in French most of the time. However, if a complicated issue or a point of order is raised, I must rely on our interpreters, because making a fair decision is paramount.

After that, I think my hon. colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle will tell you that one must have experience in the House and in the chair in order to step into the position. I would have to agree. In the vast majority of professions, one must go through a period of training in order to master all aspects of the job. I think the same holds true here. That is why I believe that the candidate from Regina—Qu'Appelle, the candidate from Victoria and I have an advantage in this contest.

[English]

Later, I expect one thing we will hear from the member for Simcoe North is that having the right temperament is key, that having an approachable and fair-minded facilitator, someone with a calm and contemplative nature, is critically important to have in the chair.

Once again, I agree with my colleague. I believe I have the temperament well-suited to this position. I listen carefully, consider all points of view, and seek consensus when resolving delicate situations.

Finally, I expect that the candidate from Brandon—Souris across the aisle will highlight his experience managing multi-million dollar budgets as a provincial cabinet minister.

I also agree with my colleague that experience managing large public sector budgets is invaluable training to serve as Speaker of the House. While never having been a provincial cabinet minister, I have served as chief of staff for two in Ontario and played a major role managing a budget of tens of millions of dollars.

I have also served as the director of research for a national political party where I hired and managed a staff of more than 30 persons.

As I reflect back on all the positive things I have said about my fellow candidates, it seems to me that we might be able to construct the perfect Speaker if we could take the best from each of them. Alas, that is not possible. The perfect candidate is not available.

The reality is that 300 members must decide which of the eight candidates they believe would be best able to serve in this role. If it is felt that on balance I am the strongest candidate in this group, then I ask for the support of the members. If I am elected as Speaker, I will work hard every day to warrant that trust and to serve members to the best of my ability.

• (1140)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I will now call upon Mr. Ed Holder, the hon. member for the electoral district of London West, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

*Election of Speaker**[Translation]*

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Hon. colleagues, allow me first to congratulate you on your election. You are here because this is important to you and you have decided to make a difference.

Having campaigned to become a member of Parliament sets you apart from the 34 million other Canadians, especially considering that only 5,000 Canadians have been elected to this House since Confederation.

[English]

My friends, I recall I was in awe when I first came to this place. Even with my 30 years of business experience, I could not help but feel like a young person going to his first job. When I took my seat in this House, I was so excited. I knew this is where I should be. It was inspiring.

[Translation]

To the new hon. members, allow me to welcome you to Parliament and to your new parliamentary family. Savour this experience: it will become a part of you. We are proud to have you as colleagues and we sincerely wish you all the best.

[English]

It is tremendous to have our colleagues who are returning back in Parliament. Today, it is my honour to present myself to all members for their thoughtful consideration as Speaker of the House.

I stand before the members today because I was first approached by a member of the opposition upon the announcement of the pending retirement of Speaker Milliken. Although a thoughtful compliment, it was not until several members from all parties suggested strongly that I consider the role that I was compelled to take it more seriously. After some deliberations and strong encouragement, I have agreed to let my name stand.

Colleagues, today we have our first duty, which is to elect our Speaker. I am honoured to be joined by several friends who have allowed their names to stand. I know these people as exceptionally honourable and I consider them worthy choices.

My friends, I am a great believer in the importance of tradition, especially when it comes to this place, the House of Commons.

In the spirit of that tradition, I have not overtly campaigned for the position. It will be decided today if that was the right approach.

[Translation]

Instead, I have tried whenever possible to meet with you personally to introduce myself and talk to you about issues that matter to you, about your ideas and your expectations of the Speaker of the House. I will do the same as Speaker. I believe it is the hon. members who make this place so extraordinary and that is why I did not submit my candidacy in a letter or through the media. As the Speaker, my door will always be open. In fact, I encourage all of us to build new relationships with our colleagues.

[English]

What we have heard from candidates is the need for greater decorum and civility in the House; that we must show greater respect among one another. Ironically, nothing separates any of the

candidates in that regard. We have all learned through our parents to treat each other with respect and civility, and we know this to be true. I was taught that by my Cape Breton mother.

However, that is only one part, albeit an important part, of the role of Speaker. The Speaker is also chair of the Board of Internal Economy and, as such, is responsible for the whole parliamentary precinct. The budget and staff for this is significant, and my experience as chief executive officer of a successful large company, I believe, positions me well for this responsibility.

At the same time, there is a necessity to show fiscal prudence. Our bosses, the Canadian taxpayers, deserve no less. I will commit to taking the same business approach to the budget as I did when I ran my own company, with a critical eye and a compassionate, caring style.

Colleagues, we also need to return to a time of representing the traditions of this House when parliamentarians were the ones responsible for our affairs. This is our place. These are our choices and it begins by building respectful relationships with each other.

The Speaker has a role to play in supporting these relationships. Speaker Milliken did a superb job in encouraging members from all parties to come together in a non-partisan fashion on a regular basis through various events and receptions. It is my intention to carry on with these important traditions.

• (1145)

[Translation]

The Speaker is the servant of this House. If you give me the honour of serving, I will do so with humility and respect.

We have all come here with the goal of making Canada better.

[English]

With the thoughtful support of members, we can do it together. I thank them for their thoughtful consideration.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I will now call upon Mr. Lee Richardson, the hon. member for the electoral district of Calgary Centre, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): First of all, I would like to thank my long-time colleague in the House of Commons, the dean of this House, my friend, the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour.

[English]

We have an important decision to make today in choosing one of our members to preside over the House for the 41st Parliament.

Each of us has a strong personal interest in making this a better place. I will not dwell on the obvious: the incivility of recent years, the lack of decorum and the lack of mutual respect. We all know what must be done and I think we know it can be done. Today we will choose the person among us who we think can get it done, presiding over the House as its firm guiding hand.

In making your decision, you will seek strength of character, parliamentary experience, knowledge of history and an understanding of the people and the regions whose interests we represent. You will want an individual in whom you have confidence to represent the House with fairness, dignity and respect.

Throughout my life, this House has been like a home to me. I first stepped into the visitors gallery of this place in 1972 as executive assistant for the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker. I watched some of the greatest parliamentarians of their day. I served on the senior staff of Prime Minister Mulroney for five years and, in 1988, I sought election and was privileged to serve in the government caucus.

Over these years, I have learned about victory and I have learned about defeat. I learned why running for Parliament is one of the greatest sacrifices we can make as men and women, fathers and mothers. I hold in the highest regard any man or woman who puts his or her reputation on the line to seek election and serve their community and country in this place.

Throughout my time here, I have seen great Speakers, those whose words uttered with great calmness and authority could cool a boiling House of Commons. I have seen others who tried with every ounce of their energy and intellect but could never quite manage the hard political conflict that, left unchecked, could turn debate into dispute. I have learned from them all as I have learned from the oratorical masters of this place for nearly four decades.

That is why my commitment, if chosen as Speaker, is to earn and keep earning the respect of this House, to defend the sacred rights of MPs and to deal with each member as an equal.

I know that the Speaker's authority comes from the members and from the members only. The Speaker must inspire their confidence and earn their trust through a relationship founded on fairness, integrity, mutual respect and character.

I know from experience that members will accept a decision when they understand it was arrived at fairly, with impartiality and with due regard for tradition, precedent and the rules of procedure.

When members look at their choice for Speaker, they should see an individual with experience, judgment and character, and the personal fortitude to put those qualities to the service of members.

As has been said, the Speaker is also an ambassador for Parliament, a parliamentary host of visiting dignitaries, as well as representing this House and Canada in international parliamentary meetings. I shall represent members and this Parliament with dignity, purpose and honour.

In closing, I would like to quote from my maiden speech in this House 23 years ago when I said, "We have built one of the world's greatest nations, not on might, but on justice and tolerance. Tolerance is the basis of a civilized society".

Election of Speaker

That reality is reflected in the celebration of our two official languages, French and English.

Growing up in Ottawa my children had an opportunity, which I did not have growing up in Calgary, to learn French.

• (1150)

[Translation]

So although they are both bilingual, their father is not, at least not yet.

I will do everything possible to improve my French, and I assure you that I will defend the equality of French and English in the House if I have the honour of serving you as Speaker.

[English]

As my dear colleagues can hear, my French is a work in progress but it is progressing.

I seek to serve this House as Speaker. I put before my colleagues my goals, my commitment and the skills I bring to restore dignity and respect. In service to members, I will make this institution an honourable place for the people's representatives to debate and shape important public policy once again.

I would be honoured to have your support.

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I now invite Ms. Denise Savoie, the hon. member for the riding of Victoria, to take the floor for not more than five minutes.

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would like to congratulate all of my colleagues here today.

It is an honour and a privilege to sit in this House, to represent our constituents' interests and values, and to advance public policy.

[English]

Before I begin, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga whose wife passed away recently.

I present myself today to serve as Speaker with a singular focus on raising the tone of debate in the House to a level that restores the confidence of Canadians in their politicians and in this democratic institution. I offer to facilitate a process by which each of us and our parties commit to a higher standard of conduct, that we monitor our progress and that we make concrete procedural changes to support our goal.

Election of Speaker

During the last election campaign, many Victorians told me that Parliament should work in the interest of Canadians, not the interest of parties. In the time I have been here, I have tried to operate under that exact principle. Of course this is a partisan place. It is adversarial by design, and for good reason. However, unlike high school debates, the idea of parliamentary debate is not to score points but to make good public policy.

Each of us here represents different perspectives that our electors have judged deserve to be heard and, I dare say, incorporated in public policy so that government and Parliament truly work for all Canadians. It is absolutely not the Speaker's job to determine substantively how this is to happen, but it can be the Speaker's job to nurture, to foster and to maintain an environment where this approach can succeed. It is absolutely important that this be allowed to happen.

● (1155)

[Translation]

Imagine for a moment a parliament that functions well, a parliament where debate is intelligent, informed, witty and, above all, respectful.

Imagine a parliament where our interaction leads to more inclusive public policy, and thus to win-win situations for all Canadians.

I am not proposing a utopian project, but an objective that must be met to reverse the cynicism that Canadians feel toward their politicians and democratic institutions.

So I stand today, fully committed to the Speaker's chief duty to preserve order and decorum in the proceedings of this House.

I also promise to protect the rights and privileges of every member, and to balance them with our responsibility to serve the interests of all Canadians, according to the rules of procedures of Parliament.

The Speaker cannot do this alone. All members of this House must also be committed to these goals.

[English]

I thus ask for the support of members today only if they are prepared to do their part to improve decorum, to work with me to improve the way we conduct business, our debates, question period and all of our interactions. I pledge as your Speaker to be guided solely by the will of the House and, if that will is resolute in the pursuit of a well-functioning Parliament, together we can restore the faith of Canadians in their Parliament.

Our outgoing Speaker said recently that federal politics had become less democratic and more partisan since he was a rookie MP. I hope that one of the rookie MPs here today will retire as MP one day and can say the exact opposite. Let us say today that the 41st Parliament was the turning point. Let that change begin today.

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I now call upon Mr. Andrew Scheer, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Chair and hon. members, first let me also congratulate the members present today. Whether this is your first term or, like you, Mr. Chair and the dean of the House, your ninth, I am sure you will agree that there is nothing like entering the House of Commons for the first time after an election.

[English]

If I can beg the indulgence of those members who heard my speech in the 40th Parliament in a similar circumstance, I would like to use the words of Speaker William Lenthall to describe the nature of the position of speaker.

When King Charles went into the House in 1642 and demanded to know the whereabouts of certain MPs, Speaker Lenthall told the king:

May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here...

[Translation]

In my view, that is the primary role of the Speaker. The Speaker must serve the House first. It is the Speaker's responsibility to ensure that all members can exercise their rights and privileges in the House. The Speaker's authority comes from all the members, and that allows the House to function properly.

[English]

I believe I can carry on that legacy thanks to the experience I have gained over the last several years. I have spent the last five years in the Speaker's chair and, up until about an hour ago, as deputy speaker. Before that, I was the assistant deputy speaker from 2006 to 2008.

It is an old maxim that one learns by doing and I have certainly learned a great deal with first-hand experience in the chair. Experience and expertise should count for a lot and, while every candidate has many different experiences in different areas that will no doubt be helpful to them, I believe there is nothing quite like on-the-job training. As deputy speaker, I learned the rules, procedures and precedents while actually being in the chair.

In speaking with many members, I have received very positive feedback on the impartial and fair way I have presided over the House. I have always taken care to ensure that all parties and, indeed, all individual members were treated fairly while I presided.

I have heard some feedback about my age and I know that I am getting quite old now. The current speaker of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, Mr. John Bercow, also faced questions about his age as he was relatively young when he successfully ran for speaker. I am sure he will not mind me retelling one of his stories. In his speech asking members for their support, one particular MP said to him:

Certainly not, Bercow. You are not just too young; you are far too young—given that, in my judgment, the Speaker ought to be virtually senile.

● (1200)

[Translation]

I hope that no one here feels that way.

Many of you have spoken to me about decorum and courtesy.

*Election of Speaker**[English]*

I absolutely agree that the speaker needs to play a more assertive role in improving the tone of debate in this place. I believe it is time for the speaker to use the Standing Orders that already exist and are available to more strictly enforce the rules regarding behaviour.

When I was in the chair, often throughout debate we would see particular members, and I will not mention any names, consistently be disruptive and discourteous to their colleagues. Because their names were on a list, they would stand in question period, give a statement and expect the floor to be given to them. We should have a system and a speaker in place to ensure that members do not receive respect from their colleagues until they learn to give it.

[Translation]

Rest assured that I will make certain that members who refuse to follow the rules of debate will not be allowed to speak until they have demonstrated the respect deserved by an institution as important as the House of Commons.

[English]

In the last Parliament, I also noticed the way toxic language has crept into debate. We have a list of unparliamentary words but we need to go beyond that. I do not think unparliamentary language should be constricted to only a technical list. The speaker should ensure that members follow not just the letter of the rules regarding unparliamentary language but the spirit as well.

Base name calling and questioning the motives of other hon. members create a toxic environment, which I think is what Canadians feel let down the most about. By showing each other the mutual respect that we would expect from anyone else is very important.

[Translation]

As Speaker, I would like to see a respectful and courteous House of Commons in which members can freely discuss laws and ideas, knowing that their rights and privileges are protected. We have a duty to all Canadians to ensure that the House functions properly.

To my francophone colleagues, I can say that I learned French in school for 13 years, but when I moved to Saskatchewan, I forgot some vocabulary and verb conjugations. However, I am making a concerted effort to improve my French. I am learning the subjunctive, despite the imperfect nature of my discourse.

[English]

Protecting the rights of individual MPs is also an important task for any Speaker. If you select me, I will ensure that each member has the right to be heard. Our rights should be protected collectively, but each individual MP needs to have his or her rights upheld as well.

Based upon my experience, my passion for this place, and my fair enforcement of the rules, I humbly ask for your support.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I will now call upon Mr. Bruce Stanton, the hon. member for the electoral district of Simcoe North, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Chair, this being the first opportunity I have to speak in the 41st Parliament, I would

like to take time to thank the great people of Simcoe North for giving me their confidence for a third term.

[Translation]

I would like to congratulate the hon. members who have been elected and welcome those who are sitting here for the first time.

[English]

Canadians have elected their first majority Parliament in 11 years. It is the first time since 2004 that a federal election is not looming and it is a first term for more than one-third of hon. members. We have an opportunity to make the House of Commons work better for Canadians. Today is a big part of that; our choice for Speaker.

To help inform members in order to make a decision today, I would like to take a moment to give some of my background, relate some of my experience and share my thoughts on the role and responsibilities of Speaker.

[Translation]

During the 25 years I spent learning to run our family's tourism business in central Ontario, it became clear to me that our success relied on the relationships we built with the people we worked with: our family members, clients, staff and competitors.

● (1205)

[English]

We know that the same holds true for the work we do in public life. Listening to and understanding our constituents, colleagues, team members, volunteers, and even our political opponents, greatly determines our accomplishments.

This is the life experience that has guided my work in public life to this day. They are the lessons which helped me in chairing the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in the last Parliament.

[Translation]

In committee, I learned that the judicious and impartial use of procedural rules and profound respect for each member allowed the proceedings to take place in a civil and frank manner.

[English]

We are all aware that Canadians would like to see an improvement in the level of civility and decorum in the House. So, too, I expect, would members.

[Translation]

The difficulty lies in balancing the protection of a member's rights and privileges—freedom of speech—with respect for order and decorum. It is a careful balance, one that the Speaker must maintain.

[English]

As a servant of the House, the Speaker can only preside within the limits that the House and hon. members grant.

Election of Speaker

Achieving an improvement in civility and decorum will take a combined effort, the will of members, the fair and consistent application of procedural rules by the Speaker, and a strong working relationship among the Speaker and our House leaders and whips. This is a task that I would look forward to working through so that Canadians could take greater pride with our work here.

[Translation]

To conclude, I believe it is crucial that the Speaker be able to communicate in both official languages. My French teacher has told me that I am at an intermediate level and that, with some hard work, I could be functionally bilingual within a year. I am making that commitment here before you, Mr. Presiding Officer, and before the members.

I would like to thank the hon. members for having listened to me today. I would be honoured to have your support.

[English]

I thank hon. members for your consideration today and I would be honoured to have your support.

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I now call upon Mr. Merv Tweed, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, to address the House for not more than five minutes.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would first like to congratulate everyone who was re-elected and welcome all the newly elected members. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents in Brandon—Souris for their unfailing support.

[English]

Brandon—Souris is located in the southwest corner of Manitoba, a province which I call *le coeur du Canada*, because we are the heart of this body called Canada. Manitoba is also home to Canada's newest NHL hockey team of which we are all very proud.

[Translation]

I am honoured to be considered for the very important role of Speaker of the House.

[English]

I have served at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government in many roles, including deputy reeve, Manitoba minister of industry, trade and tourism and chair of the very productive House committee here, transport, infrastructure and communities.

In over 20 years of public life I have experienced the highs and the lows of forming a government and forming an opposition, which gives me a unique perspective and an understanding of the balance a Speaker must preserve in a progressive chamber.

These insights and experiences on both sides of the House have taught me the benefits of working with all parties in a constructive manner and as your Speaker I will continue to do so.

Colleagues, over the last several years we have experienced a severe decline in decorum in this wonderful chamber. I find it disturbing that members attack each other, not only from a policy

perspective, but on a personal level and this behaviour has to stop. Make no mistake, if you elect me as your Speaker, I will do all within my power to correct this decline.

● (1210)

[Translation]

I believe the Speaker of the House has a crucial role to play in preserving decorum in this House.

[English]

However, as Speaker, I cannot do this alone. Above all other reasons, my pursuit of this position is to ensure that our Canadian democracy is delivered in a productive and respectful way. I have always treated members with respect and I believe that if asked, those with whom I have served would say the same.

As Speaker, I would commit to all members of this chamber to be accessible to you at all times.

[Translation]

As Speaker, I will serve as every member's Speaker, regardless of their party colours, and I promise to be accessible to each and every one of you.

[English]

I have experience from years of public service. I have demonstrated a non-partisan demeanour throughout my career. I would fully commit every hour of my day to this important position. I would work to restore decorum in the House while treating all with respect.

As Speaker, I would also represent members of Parliament throughout Canada and the world with dignity and honour.

[Translation]

Today, we, as members of Parliament, have an opportunity to prove to Canadians that this Parliament of Canada will be one where very much needed decorum and respect are once again the order of the day.

[English]

By electing me Speaker, I would provide the confidence and direction to conduct the orders of the House according to the time tested rules. I have been serving Canadians with respect and dignity for the better part of my adult life and I would continue this ethic should my name be the final one chosen today.

I humbly ask for your support and thank you.

[Translation]

I humbly submit my name for your consideration.

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Before I suspend the sitting for one hour, I wish to remind hon. members that the bells to call the members back to the House will be sounded for not more than five minutes. You therefore have one hour to reflect before returning to the House to vote.

When you are done reflecting, perhaps you will have time to discuss the Canucks' fantastic win last night.

[English]

The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 12:13 p.m.)

● (1315)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 1:18 p.m.)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order, please. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, the House will now proceed to elect a Speaker.

[Translation]

A list of those members who are eligible as candidates has been placed in each polling station and at the table.

May I please have the ballot box, Sergeant-at-Arms?

[English]

After the Clerk has unsealed the ballots, I will suggest a method of proceeding which will help to accelerate the voting process.

[Translation]

As we are about to begin the voting procedure, may I remind hon. members to print the first and last name of their candidate on their ballot.

[English]

I would suggest that members leave their desk, exit through the curtains and come to the table using the doors on the left and the right of the Chair on their respective side of the House. A clerk will issue a ballot paper to each member.

[Translation]

After casting their ballot, members are asked to leave the voting area.

The polling booths are now open.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

● (1340)

[English]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): If there are any members who have not voted and wish to do so, will they please vote now.

[Translation]

If any hon. members have not yet voted and wish to do so, will they please vote now?

All members having voted, I now instruct the Clerk of the House to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot. Would the Sergeant-at-Arms please bring the ballot box forward?

[English]

SUSPENSION OF HOUSE

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Before I suspend the sitting may I bring to the attention of members that

Election of Speaker

when the counting of the ballots has been completed the bells to call the members back to the House will be sounded for not more than five minutes.

[Translation]

The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1:44 p.m.)

● (1405)

[English]

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 2:09 p.m.)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): It is my duty to inform the House that a second ballot will be necessary.

● (1410)

[Translation]

The names of members eligible for the second ballot are as follows:

Barry Devolin

Ed Holder

Lee Richardson

Denise Savoie

Andrew Scheer

Merv Tweed

[English]

We will now proceed to the second ballot. If any members whose names I have just read wish to withdraw as a candidate for the second ballot, would they please rise in their places and state their reasons.

[Translation]

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations.)

● (1435)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 2:36 p.m.)

● (1455)

[Translation]

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 2:58 p.m.)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order, please. It is my duty to inform the House that another ballot will be necessary. The names of members eligible for the next ballot are as follows:

Election of Speaker

Barry Devolin

Lee Richardson

Denise Savoie

Andrew Scheer

Merv Tweed

If any members whose names I have just read wish to withdraw as candidates for the next ballot, will they please rise in their places and do so.

[English]

For the benefit of hon. members a revised alphabetical list of candidates for the next ballot will be placed in each polling station within the next five minutes at which time voting will commence.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations.)

• (1515)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): If there are any members who have not voted and wish to do so, will they please vote now.

• (1520)

[Translation]

All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 3:20 p.m.)

• (1535)

[Translation]

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 3:39 p.m.)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order, please. It is my duty to inform the House that another ballot will be necessary.

[English]

The names of those members who can be considered on the next ballot are as follows:

Lee Richardson

Denise Savoie

Andrew Scheer

Merv Tweed

If any hon. members whose names the Chair has just announced to the House wish to withdraw as a candidate on the fourth ballot, will they please rise in their place and do so.

A revised alphabetical list of candidates for the fourth ballot will be placed in each polling station shortly.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1555)

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order. If there are any hon. members who have not yet voted and who wish to do so, will they please vote now.

Are you ready to count the ballots?

All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

• (1600)

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 4:00 p.m.)

• (1615)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 4:19 p.m.)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order, please. It is my duty to inform the House that another ballot will be necessary.

The names of the members eligible for the next ballot are as follows:

Lee Richardson

Denise Savoie

Andrew Scheer

• (1620)

[Translation]

If any members whose names I have just read wish to withdraw as candidates for the next ballot, would they please rise in their places and do so.

Let us have the vote.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations.)

• (1635)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): If there are any hon. members who have not yet voted and who wish to do so, will they please vote now.

All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

Election of Speaker

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 4:39 p.m.)

• (1655)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 4:58 p.m.)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order. It is my duty to inform the House that another ballot will be necessary.

The names of the members eligible for the next ballot are as follows:

Denise Savoie

Andrew Scheer

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1715)

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

We will suspend the sitting to count the ballots, and you will be informed of the winner in approximately 20 minutes.

I would point out that we will proceed with another ballot in the event of a tie. This happened in 1994.

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5:20 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 5:37 p.m.)

• (1735)

(The Clerk of the House having provided the Presiding Officer with the name of the member having received a majority of the votes cast:)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Order, please. It is my duty to inform the House that a Speaker of the House has been duly elected.

It is with great pleasure that I invite the hon. member for the electoral district of Regina—Qu'Appelle to take the chair now.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): I now invite the right hon. Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to escort the hon. Andrew Scheer to the chair.

(The Presiding Officer having vacated the chair, and the mace having been laid under the table, the right hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition conducted Mr. Andrew Scheer from his seat in the House to the chair)

• (1740)

[Translation]

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Louis Plamondon): Thank you all for your co-operation and civility today. I hope this cordiality will continue for the rest of the session.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would like to express my humble thanks for the great honour the House has given me by electing me Speaker.

[English]

I beg to return my humble acknowledgments to the House for the great honour my colleagues have conferred upon me by choosing me to be their Speaker.

This is one time in a session when there is a little bit of liberty in whom the Speaker recognizes. I would be remiss if I did not point out my lovely wife and my latest son, Henry, in the gallery. I would not have had any seat in the House of Commons, never mind this seat, if it were not for the support and love she has given me over the years. My parents, James and Mary Scheer, are here as well. A good friend of mine, all the way from Regina, Joan Baylis, is here as well.

[Translation]

I am very honoured by the trust you have put in me today.

[English]

As I mentioned in my speech, over the past few years I have had the honour to be Deputy Speaker and Assistant Deputy Speaker. It truly has made me appreciate all that every member brings to this House.

I have often said that we are all motivated by the same thing. We may disagree fundamentally on issues and ideas, but we all do sincerely want Canada to be the best country it can be. I have come to appreciate that on a personal level with each and every member. Thank you very much for supporting me today, it really means a lot.

It has been a long day of voting, a little longer than last time, so I will keep my remarks short.

I promise that I will do my best to live up to the trust placed in me. I cannot claim that I will ever be perfect, but members can count that I will give 100% to the job they have given me today.

And the mace having been laid upon the table:

[Translation]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

[English]

I know this is something you have been preparing yourself for, through very hard work, for a very long time. I know it is a great day for you and your family and I again congratulate you. I also recognize, after all these years of work, that in the last few minutes you have shown a traditional reluctance to take the position. When we brought you to the chair, the Leader of the Opposition had a weapon. In any case, I am sure, nevertheless, that this is a proud day for everyone in your home.

Election of Speaker

Today's election served as a stellar example of how all members of the House have a say in its operation and how we can all work together in reaching an important decision.

● (1745)

[Translation]

All of the members who were in contention for this role deserve recognition. The same holds true for the Clerk and the dean of the House, the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, who has so impartially overseen the vote today. I was worried, and I assume you were as well, Mr. Speaker, to see how comfortable he was becoming in the role.

Your election by secret ballot demonstrates the great confidence that the members of the House have in you, your fairness and, above all, your ability to maintain the dignity and decorum associated with respectful debate.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, clearly the members of the House have as much confidence in you as your constituents, the good citizens of Regina—Qu'Appelle. In this job you are the custodian of a great parliamentary tradition.

Let me observe the following at this time, with the eyes of the nation and indeed the hockey world focused on Vancouver. It bears noting, Mr. Speaker, that you are the nation's top referee and its linesman, too. Your guidance will ensure that nobody crosses the line or goes offside. Most importantly, we will do our best to ensure there are no fights for you to break up.

[Translation]

Members on both sides of the House will work with you to play fair so that we can shake hands like hockey players after the big game.

[English]

In closing, Mr. Speaker, please accept from all members on this side of the House, not only our sincere congratulations but also our full co-operation as you undertake these very important responsibilities in Parliament and in our country.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a bit of history was made today in that it is the first time that a Speaker of the House has been wrestled up the aisle to that chair by a New Democrat. These special moments need to be noted for the record in *Hansard*. New Democrats extend sincere congratulations to you on your election today.

I also want to commend all members who took the opportunity to present themselves as speaker of this place and for the words they shared with all of us. If we could put them all together and follow the spirit that was laid out, Canadians would be very proud of what we have been able to accomplish. Let us set that as an objective.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to reference the contribution over 10 years of your predecessor, someone who I know, as you earlier reminded me, had taught you so much. We want to take this moment to acknowledge the Speaker of the House for the last 10 years, the former member for Kingston and the Islands.

[Translation]

If your predecessor were here, I do not think that he would hesitate to tell you that his robe—which you are not wearing now, but will be wearing tomorrow—was not always easy to wear, especially in recent years. I have seen high school teachers leave the public gallery, clearly embarrassed by the behaviour of the elected officials their students were here to observe. That must change.

I have seen accomplished women from all of the parties face intimidation simply because they were women. Some of them have even told me that they now hesitate to rise in the House. That must change and we can do it. I want to tell all members of Parliament that we can do things differently in this 41st Parliament.

● (1750)

[English]

We will disagree passionately at times but passionate debate is essential in this place. We may disagree but we must show each other respect at all times because Canadians elected each and every one of us here. When we do not show respect for each other as individuals, then we are not showing respect for the Canadians who sent us here.

I believe that together we can restore civility to this place and that we can choose to focus on the values we share and the work we have to do.

I am here to make a commitment before all members today that we will change. We are committed to doing our best to fix what is wrong in Ottawa and, to start, we have agreed that there will be no heckling from the 103 members of our caucus in this House of Commons and we will do our very best to ensure that is the case.

With that commitment, Mr. Speaker, and on behalf of the official opposition, congratulations once again on your election and best wishes in what lies ahead.

[Translation]

We are prepared to make the House of Commons an institution of which Canadians can be proud.

The Speaker: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his kind words.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in offering you our warmest congratulations on this significant personal achievement.

I think all members of the House have noticed your great interest in the affairs of this place and have noticed, as well, your commitment to an even-handed treatment of all members of the House in your previous responsibilities. I can assure you that we shall look forward very much to working closely with you and with your colleagues in ensuring that the House of Commons is as great and good a place which, at its best, I think we all know that it can be.

I will make a couple of further comments, Mr. Speaker, because this is one of the few opportunities that I have not to get cut off by you.

I first want to say that it is a tribute to the democracy of this place. Some of us who have been in previous Parliaments will know that there was a time when the speaker was not chosen by the members of the House. The speaker was chosen by the first minister of the day. The fact that it took six ballots, Mr. Speaker, for you to be chosen is a reflection of the democratic traditions of this place and of the fact that we have all participated in the toing and froing in the discussions that have taken place. It has been quite a remarkable day in that respect. You, sir, have come out as the winner and we continue to express our strong support, not only for you but for the institution.

Being where we are now in the House, I have to say that we pay special tribute to those who were not successful at the end with respect to the sixth ballot.

I join with my colleagues in expressing my appreciation to all those who presented themselves to the people who spoke so frankly and so candidly, and who presented themselves as effectively as they did.

[Translation]

I would like to say to my dear colleague from Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour that we have a great deal of respect for his work as the dean. We are well aware that he is no longer a member of an official party in the House. However, I can assure you that we believe that all members of the House have an important role to play in this parliament, and we will continue to respect the traditions of all members, even those who are not members of an official party, and even if we do not share all the aspirations of that party.

I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, for your efforts and your accomplishments. I join you in paying tribute to Mr. Milliken and all speakers before you, who have done an outstanding job. We expect to continue our efforts to ensure that the House works well.

● (1755)

[English]

For my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, whom we congratulate today on achieving this position with which those of us on this side are quite familiar, and I can speak personally, I am as well, I will not be making any such declarations with respect to the complete and total silence of the members of my caucus when comments are made. I know we are all deeply in favour of decorous behaviour, of behaviour that respects the civility of this place, but I am also a profound realist. I have the scars in front and the scars in my back to prove it.

I am looking forward to the first sign of life from the official opposition, to the first heckle and to the first joke. I, myself, will be keeping book on how many days, indeed hours, it will be before he sees that happen.

The Speaker: I appreciate the kind words from the member for Toronto Centre.

[Translation]

I see that the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour is rising to speak.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I congratulate you, allow me to thank all

the members of the House for their co-operation today and to tell them how much I appreciated their cordiality all day long. I hope to see this same cordiality throughout the entire session.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for his kind words. I also want to thank the hon. member for Toronto Centre for his commitment to respect the rights of every member.

I want to take this opportunity to say, on behalf of the many members here from the Bloc Québécois, that we hope you will support us in defending our rights and privileges as members of Parliament.

We offer you our most sincere congratulations and our co-operation.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to congratulate you on your victory today and to commend, as well, the hon. members who all spoke so eloquently of the dreams we share for a House of Commons that lives up to the aspirations of the citizens of Canada, who desire nothing more than that they can allow their children to watch question period without fear of learning bad habits.

I have heard such good and strong sentiments today, and I want to speak personally to you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Congratulations. Today I am very proud of your efforts and your hard work. When the time came to elect a new speaker, the members decided to elect someone quite young.

[English]

I am speaking frankly. We know you are a young Speaker, but this is a young House. We have more young members of Parliament than we have had before and, as the only woman leader of a federal political party, I note with pride we have more women, at 25%, in the House of Commons.

Perhaps with this new spirit of co-operation we can indeed deliver greater decorum, greater co-operation and greater respect. I am very proud to join the leader of the official opposition in pledging that my entire caucus will not heckle.

● (1800)

The Speaker: I sincerely thank all hon. members for their very kind words. I also pay tribute to all the other candidates who ran today. It has been a great process. I have spoken to a lot of you personally over the past few weeks and I think we have all expressed a deep appreciation for the role of the Chair. You are all great, wonderful people. It has been a pleasure to work with you, and to continue to work with you.

I should also absolutely thank the good people of Regina—Qu'Appelle. They first placed their trust in me back in 2004. It seems like so long ago, but it is only seven years. To have that continued support from my friends and neighbours back home means the world to me. There is nothing you can do in Ottawa unless you have the support of your friends and neighbours back home, and I think that is something we all need to remember every day.

Thank you once again all hon. members for your support.

Opening of Parliament

There is one more piece of business before we can leave.

When it has been indicated that all is in readiness, Their Excellencies will proceed to the Chamber of the Senate to formally open the First Session of the Forty-First Parliament of Canada.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace

[Translation]

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that I have received the following message:

Rideau Hall

June 2, 2011

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and Her Excellency Sharon Johnston will arrive at the Peace Tower at 2:30 p.m. on the 3rd day of June, 2011.

[English]

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2:35 p.m., at which time the House will proceed to the Senate where His Excellency will open the first session of the 41st Parliament.

(The House adjourned at 6:02 p.m.)

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, June 3, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 3, 2011

The House met at 2:30 p.m.

Prayers

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the Senate.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber:

● (1450)

[*English*]

And being returned to the Commons chamber:

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to report that, the House having attended on His Excellency the Governor General in the Senate chamber, I informed His Excellency that the choice of Speaker has fallen upon me, and in your names and on your behalf, I made the usual claim for your privileges which His Excellency was pleased to confirm to you.

* * *

● (1550)

OATHS OF OFFICE

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-1, respecting the administration of oaths of office.

Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to have the bill printed.

(Motions deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

The Speaker: Does the right hon. Prime Minister have the consent of the House to have the bill printed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when this House did attend His Excellency the Governor General in the Senate chamber, His Excellency was pleased to make a speech to

both Houses of Parliament. To prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy, which is as follows:

*Honourable Senators,
Members of the House of Commons,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I begin by congratulating all parliamentarians on this opening day of the Forty-first Parliament of Canada on my own behalf and on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, who sends her congratulations and warm good wishes. Many of you are returning to your duties as Members of the House of Commons, and over one hundred of you are about to take your places as elected representatives for the first time.

Together, you have been entrusted with a profound responsibility: to serve the public interest on behalf of all Canadians.

In the months since my installation as Governor General, I have had the privilege of meeting with Canadians in their communities, and at Rideau Hall and La Citadelle. It has been an honour to answer this unique call to service, and I want to share with you something of what I have learned in my travels across this remarkable country of ours.

I have learned that, regardless of age or affiliation, all Canadians want to help create a better future for this country. Each of us aspires to a Canada where everyone can succeed and contribute, where excellence and opportunity coexist.

I have met with Canadians from all walks of life and discovered this common ground.

In 2017, we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and I invite all Canadians to imagine ways to build a smarter, more caring nation as we approach this wonderful milestone. I believe that in order to achieve our vision, we must work together to support families and children, to reinforce learning and innovation, and to encourage philanthropy and volunteerism.

Each of us can answer the call to service in our own way and, together, continue this bold experiment that we call Canada.

The Address

Canadians have expressed their desire for a strong, stable national government in this new Parliament. With this clear mandate, our Government will deliver on its commitments. It will implement the next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan to build on the progress already made. It will continue to focus on jobs and growth. It will bring the federal budget back into balance. It will invest in our system of universal health care. It will support the communities and families that work so hard to care for each other. Our Government will defend the rights of law-abiding citizens, and it will promote Canadian values and interests at home and abroad.

Our Government will be here for all Canadians—for individuals, for families and for all regions of the country—as together we move Canada forward.

Here for jobs and growth

Jobs and growth will remain our Government's top priority.

Through Canada's Economic Action Plan, our Government took direct action to create jobs and protect Canadians during the global recession. On Monday, as our first order of business, our Government will reintroduce our Budget, in order to implement the next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan—our low tax plan for jobs and growth. We will get back to work on the things that matter most to Canadians: good jobs, security for our families and a prosperous future.

Our Government's plan builds on five years of hard work to create the right conditions for growth and job creation: a stable, predictable, low-tax environment; a highly skilled and flexible workforce; support for innovation and new technologies; and wider access to markets abroad. This approach has allowed Canada to meet the challenges of the global recession. The next phase of our Government's plan is designed to help us stay on track during the recovery.

Since 2006, Canadians have benefited from significant, broad-based tax cuts. These cuts have given families the flexibility to make the choices that are right for them. They have freed businesses to grow and succeed, creating the jobs on which Canadians depend. Our Government will continue on this path by introducing new tax credits for individuals and families, and by keeping taxes low to create jobs. It will also complete work already underway with the Government of Quebec to reach an agreement on tax harmonization no later than September 15, 2011.

However, there is more to be done. The global economy remains fragile, and risks to our recovery persist. As well, Canada's workforce is aging, and it will no longer grow as it has in the past. This demographic challenge will impact our economic future and put long-term pressures on our pension and health systems that must be addressed.

In the years ahead, our prosperity will also depend on making sure that all Canadians have the skills and opportunities to contribute, to innovate and to succeed. Our Government's plan will provide assistance for workers who want to learn new skills and seize opportunities. It will remove barriers for older workers who want to continue their careers. It will lay the foundation for long-term growth by helping a new generation gain the critical skills they will need to thrive in the workforce.

The success of Canada's job-creating businesses demands both hard work and good ideas, and we must create the right conditions for both to be rewarded. Our Government will introduce and seek swift passage of copyright legislation that balances the needs of creators and users.

In order to improve Canada's productivity, enhance our economic competitiveness and increase our standard of living, our Government will continue to make targeted investments to promote and encourage research and development in Canada's private sector and in our universities, colleges and polytechnics. It will look for ways to support innovation while ensuring that federal investment in research and development is effective and maximizes results for Canadians. It will also release and implement a Digital Economy Strategy that enhances digital infrastructure and encourages Canadian businesses to adopt digital technologies and provide digital-skills training for their employees and new hires.

In addition, our Government will continue to cut red tape for small businesses so that they can focus their attention on growing their businesses and creating jobs. This will be achieved while maintaining the highest standards to protect our environment and the health and safety of Canadians.

Our Government will also continue opening new markets for Canadian businesses in order to create good new jobs for Canadian workers. Since 2006, we have signed free trade agreements covering eight countries, and negotiations covering some fifty more are underway.

Our Government will aim to complete negotiations on a free trade agreement with the European Union by 2012. It will also seek to complete negotiations on a free trade agreement with India in 2013. In all international forums and bilateral negotiations, our Government will continue to stand up for Canadian farmers and industries by defending supply management.

The United States is our most important trading partner, ally and friend. Our Government will work with President Obama and his administration to deliver on the Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness. We will strengthen our collaboration to streamline and secure our border and enhance regulatory cooperation, ensuring that people and goods can flow freely and safely between our two countries.

Our Government also understands the importance of attracting foreign investment to our economy. Foreign investment helps Canadian companies grow by introducing new technologies and practices—launching pads to strengthen growth and innovation here at home. It provides new opportunities to connect our firms to the world. Our Government will continue to welcome foreign investment that benefits Canada.

Our Government will also move forward with willing partners to establish a new national securities regulator, subject to the Supreme Court's decision on the extent of federal jurisdiction.

Here to eliminate the deficit

Nearly three years ago, the world faced an unprecedented financial crisis. Drawing on strong fundamentals and the values of the hard-working Canadians and firms that refused to let difficult times define them, our Economic Action Plan helped Canada emerge quickly from recession. Working closely with provinces, territories and communities, our Government moved swiftly to deliver a targeted, time-limited stimulus program that created and protected jobs right across the country.

Hard work, determination and responsible choices allowed us to make these extraordinary investments when times were tough, while avoiding the high debt levels that threaten other countries. We must now take that same approach to future growth. We must eliminate the deficit and return to balanced budgets to ensure that our economy can continue to grow and create jobs and that the federal government will have sufficient fiscal flexibility for future choices.

Our Government had committed to achieving this by 2015. In order to accelerate the return to a balanced budget and to eliminate the deficit one year earlier, over the next year we will undertake a Strategic and Operating Review of government spending led by a new Cabinet subcommittee established for this purpose. This review will be focused on reducing the cost of government, while keeping taxes low and preserving transfers to individuals and provinces for essential things like pensions, health and education. Our Government will also complete its stimulus package as promised and continue specific measures to restrain the growth of government expenditures.

Our Government's plan will put us on a strong footing to resume paying down the federal debt, further reduce taxes on families and continue investing in priorities.

Here for hard-working families

There is no greater priority for Canadians than caring for their loved ones. Canadians believe that their parents and grandparents have worked hard and deserve a secure retirement. They want their children and grandchildren to grow up with every opportunity to lead happy, healthy lives.

Many Canadian families struggle to realize these goals. That is why our Government's low-tax plan will permanently enhance the Guaranteed Income Supplement for some 680,000 of Canada's most vulnerable seniors. This increase—the largest in a quarter century—will help these seniors make ends meet. At the same time, our Government will continue to help Canadians save for their retirement, and will work with provincial and territorial partners to implement the Pooled Registered Pension Plan.

Our Government's plan also recognizes the tremendous time and resources required of family caregivers. Many individuals and families have added responsibilities in caring for infirm parents or relatives. These family caregivers make special sacrifices, often leaving the workforce temporarily and forgoing employment income.

The Address

The new Family Caregiver Tax Credit will support those who care for a dependent family member who is infirm. In addition, our Government will remove the cap on eligible expenses that caregivers can claim under the Medical Expense Tax Credit.

Our Government will also support parents in providing their children with opportunities to grow personally and discover their creative passions by establishing a Children's Arts Tax Credit.

Canadians want and expect their health care system to be there when they and their families need it most. Canadians want better results from the health care system, at the same time as an aging population is putting unprecedented pressure on the system's ability to deliver.

Our Government is committed to respecting provincial jurisdiction and working with the provinces and territories to ensure that the health care system is sustainable and that there is accountability for results. It will maintain the six percent escalator for the Canada Health Transfer, while working collaboratively with provincial partners to renew the Health Accord and to continue reducing wait times. As has been done before, our Government will enter into a separate agreement with the Government of Quebec regarding the implementation of the renewed Health Accord.

Here to stand on guard for Canada

Canadians are united by core values, a shared history and a sense of common purpose. Our Government will join Canadians in celebrating our heritage, in promoting our values and in standing for what is right on the world stage. In an uncertain global environment, our Government will also continue to pursue a stable, principled foreign policy that advances Canada's interests.

The Canadian Armed Forces play a crucial role in defending our sovereignty and national security. As the Canadian mission in Afghanistan transitions to training, diplomacy and development, our Government joins Canadians in honouring those who gave their lives and in recognizing the sacrifice and achievements of all the men and women, both military and civilian, who have served and continue to serve in Afghanistan. Our Government will continue to recognize and support all veterans.

Today, as North Africa and the Middle East are being transformed by their people, the Canadian Armed Forces are standing tall with our allies to protect civilians in Libya. Our Government will hold a parliamentary debate on the future of this important mission.

As part of our ongoing efforts to promote human rights, our Government will create a new Office of Religious Freedom to help protect religious minorities and to promote the pluralism that is essential to the development of free and democratic societies.

The Address

We will also take action to strengthen our national sovereignty. Our Government is committed to protecting the integrity of our immigration system. It will introduce measures to address marriage fraud—an abuse of our system that can victimize unsuspecting Canadians and vulnerable immigrants. Our Government will also reintroduce legislation to combat human smuggling, which can place migrants in dangerous conditions and undermine trust in Canada's immigration system.

Our Government has made Canada's North a cornerstone of its agenda. The strongest expression of our sovereignty comes through presence and actions, not words. Our Government will continue to exercise leadership in the stewardship of northern lands and waters. It is also committed to working with the Northwest Territories and the private sector to complete the Dempster Highway—by linking Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk—thereby realizing Prime Minister Diefenbaker's vision of connecting Canada by road from sea to sea to sea.

Canada's natural environment shapes our national identity, our health and our prosperity. Our Government has expanded protected lands and marine areas to an unprecedented extent, so that current and future generations can continue to enjoy them. In this, the 100th anniversary year of our national parks system, our Government will create significant new protected areas. It will work with provincial, regional, municipal, Aboriginal and community stakeholders toward establishing an urban national park in the Rouge Valley of eastern Toronto. Looking to the future, our Government will engage a broad range of stakeholders on the development of a National Conservation Plan, to move our conservation objectives forward and better connect all Canadians with nature.

Our Government is committed to developing Canada's extraordinary resource wealth in a way that protects the environment. It will support major new clean energy projects of national or regional significance, such as the planned Lower Churchill hydroelectricity project in Atlantic Canada. It will engage the provinces, territories and industry on ways to improve the regulatory and environmental assessment process for resource projects, while ensuring meaningful consultation with affected communities, including Aboriginal communities.

Beyond our natural heritage, Canadians also cherish our shared history. Anniversaries are an important part of how a society marks its collective progress and defines its goals for the future. A key milestone next year will be the bicentennial of the War of 1812. We will remember how those of diverse backgrounds and various regions came together to fight for Canada, ensuring the independent destiny of our country in North America. We will also celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Selkirk Settlement, which marks the founding of Manitoba and the early days of the modern West.

Next year we will observe Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee, celebrating her six decades of service as Queen of Canada. And Canadians look forward, in just a few weeks' time, to welcoming Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on their first Royal Tour since their marriage this spring.

Here for law-abiding Canadians

The Government of Canada has no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens and defend against threats to our national security.

Our Government will move quickly to reintroduce comprehensive law-and-order legislation to combat crime and terrorism. These measures will protect children from sex offenders. They will eliminate house arrest and pardons for serious crimes. They will give law enforcement officials, courts and victims the legal tools they need to fight criminals and terrorists. Our Government will continue to protect the most vulnerable in society and work to prevent crime. It will propose tougher sentences for those who abuse seniors and will help at risk youth avoid gangs and criminal activity. It will address the problem of violence against women and girls.

Our Government has always believed the interests of law-abiding citizens should be placed ahead of those of criminals. Canadians who are victimized or threatened by crime deserve their government's support and protection, and they should have the right to take reasonable steps to defend themselves and their property when the police cannot be there to assist them. Our Government will reintroduce legislation to clarify and strengthen laws on self-defence, defence of property and citizen's arrest.

Our Government will also continue to implement its response to the Air India Report.

Here for communities and industries

In addition to guarding the interests of our nation as a whole, our Government will continue taking action to address the needs and aspirations of every region of the country. Local communities are best placed to overcome their unique challenges, but government can help create the conditions for these communities—and the industries that sustain them—to succeed.

Canada's rural communities are rich in history and culture, and generations of rural Canadians have worked hard and played by the rules. They should not be the target of unfair laws. Our Government will act on its promise to introduce legislation to end the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry.

Canada's traditional industries remain crucial to our economy. Our Government has always stood behind Canada's agricultural, forestry, fishing, mineral, manufacturing and energy sectors—and will continue to support them as they innovate and grow. It will also introduce legislation to ensure that western farmers have the freedom to sell wheat and barley on the open market.

Canada's Aboriginal peoples are central to Canada's history, and our Government has made it a priority to renew and deepen our relationship. The contribution of Canada's Aboriginal peoples will be important to our future prosperity. Concerted action is needed to address the barriers to social and economic participation that many Aboriginal Canadians face.

Our Government will work with Aboriginal communities, provinces and territories to meet this challenge. It will help open the door to greater economic development by providing new investments in First Nations Land Management. It will promote access to clean water and the deployment of clean energy technology in Building on and northern communities.

Building on the work of the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education, our Government will engage with partners to make concrete, positive changes to give First Nations children a better education so that they can realize their dreams. We will also expand adult basic education programming in the territories to help to increase education and employment levels.

Our Government will also introduce legislation to ensure that people living on reserve have the same matrimonial real property rights and protections as other Canadians.

Canada's diverse communities are connected by shared values and aspirations, and by the willingness to lend a hand. This has been markedly evident in the response of ordinary Canadians to recent and devastating floods and wildfires. Our Government recognizes the resolve and courage shown by Canadian communities in the face of adversity and will stand by them in their times of need.

Here for integrity and accountability

In these and all other measures our Government will pursue, we will provide the principled, accountable leadership and good, clean government that Canadians deserve. On first taking office, our Government introduced major new accountability legislation as its first act in the Thirty-ninth Parliament, and it will now move forward on its long-standing commitment to democratic reform.

Reform of the Senate remains a priority for our Government. Our Government will reintroduce legislation to limit term lengths and to encourage provinces and territories to hold elections for Senate nominees.

Canadians rightly expect fairness and accountability in the full range of government institutions that serve them. Our Government will reintroduce legislation to restore fair representation in the House of Commons. It will take steps to phase out direct taxpayer subsidies to federal political parties over the next three years. It will support transparency for First Nations communities by requiring their chiefs and councillors to publish their salaries and expenses. Our Government will also support the efforts of the Public Service to modernize the way it works so that it can continue to provide the highest standard of service to Canadians.

In filling the two upcoming vacancies on the Supreme Court of Canada, our Government will engage parliamentarians through the transparent process first used in 2006.

Our Government will also ensure that citizens, the private sector and other partners have improved access to the workings of government through open data, open information and open dialogue.

Conclusion

As Canadians, we take pride in our history and look forward to our future as the true North, strong and free. From our earliest days,

The Address

we have always come together to advance our common purpose, each of us ready to do our part to move Canada forward.

Building on the careful investments and decisive actions of the past five years, our Government will move swiftly to deliver the next important phase of the Economic Action Plan. Our Government will reflect the courage Canadians show in meeting the challenges of today and their determination to rise to those they see on the horizon.

Members of the House of Commons, you will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry out the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons, let the work of our great democracy support Canadians as they go about fashioning a twenty-first century destiny limited only by their ambition and imagination.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations and make you equal to the trust bestowed upon you.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the Speech of His Excellency the Governor General, delivered this day from the Throne to the two Houses of Parliament, be taken into consideration later this day.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

DESIGNATION OF ORDER OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I request an order of the day be designated for the presentation of the budget to be delivered in this House on June 6, 2011 at 4 p.m.

* * *

● (1555)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the business of supply be considered at the next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that three days will be allotted for the supply period ending June 23, 2011.

*The Address***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a rather lengthy motion, but I anticipate there will be unanimous consent for the motion. I move:

That in relation to the business of the House and notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the membership of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates be composed of: Mike Wallace, Jacques Gaurde, Scott Armstrong, Peter Braid, Kelly Block, Ron Cannon, Bernard Trotter, Pat Martin, Alexandre Boulerville, Nycole Turmel, Denis Blanchette and John McCallum

on Monday, June 6, 2011, the House shall meet at 2:00 p.m. when Members may make statements pursuant to Standing Order 31; not later than 2:15 p.m. oral questions shall be taken up; at 3:00 p.m. the House shall proceed to the ordinary daily routine of business; following the ordinary daily routine of business the House shall, if necessary, suspend until 4:00 p.m. for the presentation of the Budget; and

until June 23, 2011, Standing Order 81 be amended as follows:

(a) Section (4) be replaced with the following:

"In every session the main estimates to cover the incoming fiscal year for every department of government shall be deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates immediately after they are presented in the House. That Committee shall consider and shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the same back to the House not later than three sitting days before the final sitting or the last allotted day in the current period".

(b) Section 5 be replaced with the following:

"Supplementary estimates shall be deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates immediately after they are presented in the House. The Committee shall consider and shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the same back to the House not later than three sitting days before the final sitting or the last allotted day in the current period". And

(c) Section 14(a) be replaced with:

"Forty-eight hours' written notice shall be given of opposition motions on allotted days, motions to concur in interim supply, main estimates, supplementary or final estimates, to restore or reinstate any item in the estimates and to oppose any item in the estimates".

Subject to the provisions of this order, the business of supply shall otherwise be conducted in accordance with Standing Order 81.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2011-12

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to present to the House a message from His Excellency the Governor General, signed by his own hand, transmitting the estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

[Translation]

This budget was tabled in the House on March 1, 2011.

[English]

The Speaker: The letter reads as follows:

His Excellency the Governor General hereby transmits to the House of Commons the Main Estimates of sums required to defray expenses of the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2012 and, in accordance with section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, recommends those Estimates to the House of Commons.

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another motion for which I am requesting unanimous consent. It states:

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be appointed to prepare and report lists of members to compose the standing and standing joint committees of this House; and that the committee be composed of Joe Preston, Tom Lukiwski, Scott Reid, Harold Albrecht, Dave MacKenzie, Greg Kerr, John Williamson, Chris Charlton, Joe Comartin, Phil Toone, Alexandrine Latendresse and Marc Garneau.

• (1600)

[English]

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House proceeded to the consideration of the speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor General at the opening of the session.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am profoundly honoured and grateful to the Prime Minister for this opportunity, in my maiden speech to the House of Commons, to move the motion in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

For this opportunity of a lifetime, my greatest thanks go to the voters of Mississauga South who I hereby commit to repay by serving them to the best of my ability with integrity, humility and hard work. I am proud to represent the kind and wonderful people of Mississauga South. This beautiful waterfront community is my home, and I will always be grateful for this opportunity to represent and to serve them.

The voters of Mississauga South elected me to represent them in this House as a member of the Conservative government for the same reasons that I chose to seek election as a candidate for the Conservative Party. For the last five years, our government, under this Prime Minister, has provided Canada with steady, capable and competent leadership. Despite the constraints and uncertainties of minority Parliaments, the government has been true to the Conservative principles and objectives that won the trust of Canadians in 2006. The dozens of government bills passed since then collectively represent a body of legislative achievement that compares favourably to the record of any government, majority or minority, in Canadian history.

If I may invoke a hockey metaphor, which seems appropriate with the whole country riveted on the Stanley Cup finals, the success of our Conservative team rests first and foremost on our great chemistry. It is true that we are little short of left-wingers but our members from communities in every region of the country have excelled at every position, and our captain, as the best ones do, has raised the game of all of his teammates.

When Canada was dragged into the worst global recession in a half century, our team showed great poise. We stuck to our long-term game plan for low taxes and economic growth. In the short term, we successfully finessed the recession with a balanced attack of stimulus spending on public infrastructure, support for the hardest hit workers and communities and skilful stickhandling of our financial system through the international banking and currency crisis.

As a result, Canada was the last major economy dragged into the recession. We were the least affected by it and we are coming out of it in stronger economic shape than our main competitors. We have the lowest debt and deficit levels in the G7. We have the best job creation track record of most industrialized nations. We also have had seven consecutive quarters of modest but consistent economic growth.

Some of the other teams in this tournament, including traditional powerhouses, have not fared so well. Their recoveries have been slowed because they are badly out of fiscal shape, carrying way too much debt. We take little comfort in this victory on these terms because, unless and until those sovereign debt levels are seriously addressed and significantly reduced, the global economic recovery will remain at grave risk, and, once again, Canada could be dragged into an international economic crisis through no fault of its own. That is why our government must, and will, proceed with the next phase of our economic action plan, our low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

On Monday, my esteemed colleague, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, the world's best finance minister, will re-introduce budget 2011. It will continue our focus on job creation and economic growth by maintaining a stable and low tax environment, nurturing a highly-skilled and mobile workforce, supporting scientific and technological research and development, reducing red tape and expanding international trade.

Continuing with the singular focus on a broad-based tax reduction, which has been a hallmark of our government since 2006, the budget will introduce new tax credits for individuals and families and continue with business tax cuts to stimulate job creation.

● (1605)

To ensure Canadians of all ages can take full advantage of these job opportunities, we will provide more support for mid-career skills training, remove age barriers for older workers and help young people to acquire the skills they need to get ahead in the workplace.

In an age when more and more Canadians are building careers in the information and other technology sectors, we will create the optimal conditions for growing the sector with a digital economic strategy. It will improve digital infrastructure and encourage businesses to expand digital technologies and hire and train

employees to achieve that goal. Moreover, copyright legislation that balances the interests of creators and consumers will streamline transactions and stimulate growth in the digital marketplace.

The Address

As a leader in the international fight against protectionism during the global recession, Canada will leverage its reputation as a free trading nation to expand an evergrowing list of trade agreements. At the top of the list are negotiations with two of the world's largest economies, India and the European Union, which both represent phenomenal opportunities for expanded trade investment and economic growth.

The United States remains our largest trading partner so our government will continue to work with the Obama administration on a continental security and economic framework that will ensure safe and streamlined trade and travel between our countries.

All these initiatives will stimulate greater foreign investment to fuel our economic growth, as will our efforts to make Canada a low tax destination for international business and investment and our plan to streamline corporate regulation with a new national securities regulator.

Among Canada's strongest comparative advantages in the global economy are its relatively low deficit and debt levels. That is what gave us the fiscal flexibility to deal with the recession as effectively as we did. However, now it is time to get back to balanced budgets so we are ready for anything the future holds.

Given the many uncertainties hanging over the recovery, it is crucial that we eliminate the deficit and start paying down the debt as soon as possible. That is why we have accelerated our timetable for returning to balanced budgets from 2015 to 2014.

The new cabinet subcommittee, which will lead a strategic and operating review of government spending, is mandated to reduce the cost of government without cutting essential health, pension and education transfers to the provinces and individuals. Its work will help restore balanced budgets and create the fiscal room that will allow for more debt paydown, more tax cuts and more investment in key priorities.

The Address

In the meantime, we will proceed with other benefits for families and seniors, including a permanent increase of the guaranteed income supplement that will boost nearly 700,000 of Canada's most vulnerable seniors, a new family caregiver tax credit to make it much easier for Canadians to look after aging or infirmed loved ones, and a new children's arts tax credit to help parents nurture the artistic and musical talents of their kids.

Recognizing Canada's aging population trends, we will also continue to expand options and incentives for retirement savings. Our tax free savings accounts were an important step in this direction and we plan to follow up with the pooled registered pension plan to help all Canadians plan for a financially secure retirement.

An aging population will also place greater demands on the health care system so we will maintain the 6% escalator in the Canada health transfer and continue working closely with the provinces to reduce wait times and renew the national health accord.

By definition, the mandate of Canada's national government is to focus on national issues and the national interest. However, within that mandate we have an obligation to help create the social and economic conditions that will allow regional communities and the industries that sustain them to prosper and succeed. Sometimes that means correcting past legislative mistakes that unfairly burdened certain communities. That is what was done to Canada's rural farmers and hunters under the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry, which is why we will introduce legislation to scrap it.

That is also what was done to western farmers under the single desk marketing system of the Canadian Wheat Board, which is why we will legislate to restore their freedom to sell wheat and barley on the open market.

● (1610)

That is what was done to Canada's aboriginal peoples when, in the name of protecting their land, customs and culture, they were locked behind legal barriers to full social and economic participation in the mainstream of Canadian life.

Our government will work with aboriginal communities to take down those barriers through new investments in first nations land management that will improve access to clean water and clean energy technologies.

Working with the provinces and territories we will also take concrete action to improve aboriginal elementary, secondary and adult education. We will also end gender-based discrimination on reserves by ensuring first nations people have the same matrimonial real property rights as all Canadians.

I am immensely proud of our government's record during our first five years in office. I am thrilled to now be a member of a government that will build on its accomplishments with the program outlined in the Speech from the Throne.

Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, that the following address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of

Military Merit, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada:

May it please Your Excellency:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Commons of Canada, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament today.

● (1615)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her remarks. I would especially like to thank the constituents in my riding of Parkdale—High Park for placing their trust in me and voting me into the House.

I have spoken to far too many members of my community who are really struggling. They are facing high household debt and many are facing unemployment. It is clear that there is an ongoing jobs crisis in Canada today. It is not only a crisis in the quantity of jobs but also in the quality of jobs. Far too many Canadians cannot make ends meet and are really struggling.

Canada's banks have made over \$22 billion in the last year, \$1 billion of which was a generous gift from the Conservative government in the form of corporate tax cuts, and yet there is no evidence that even one job has been created with that amount of money.

Why is the government going to continue down the failed path of corporate tax cuts instead of showing leadership by dealing with the reality of Canada's job crisis?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, the throne speech addresses the job crisis in Canada, as did our economic action plan that was put in place.

Members will note that Canada has emerged from the global economic recession better than any other industrialized nation. Unemployment levels are at the same place that they were at the beginning of the recession, with this government having created almost 500,000 new jobs, including 91,000 full time jobs in the month of March. This is a priority for our government and it was absolutely outlined in the throne speech today.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the member for Mississauga South to the House. I want to congratulate her for her very effective and faithful rendition of the government's policies. I was particularly encouraged, I must say, by the reference to assistance for older workers in mid-career.

However, I do have a question for the hon. member. The trouble that a lot of us have with the government's basic message is this: The Conservatives are saying that they do have money to build prisons, which most people feel are unnecessary; that they do have money to set aside for—

An hon. member: It is not true.

Hon. Bob Rae: Already, Mr. Speaker, you see the pattern is here. I see signs. I am hearing things.

The Speaker: Order, please. It is a good thing the hon. member for Toronto Centre can hear things because I am having trouble hearing the question. If we could have a little bit of order, please, he has a few seconds left to finish his question.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite remind me very much of a prayer of St. Augustine: Make me pure, but not quite yet. That is what I hear from the members opposite.

However, if there is money for this and if there is money for the tax cuts that have been mentioned by our friend from Parkdale—High Park, why would there not be additional money for the senior citizens who are living in such poverty? Rather than a cup of coffee a day, which is what is being provided by the GIS, why would there not be more, as has been proposed by the opposition parties?

• (1620)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, as all of us here in the House know, we all campaigned for 37 days and we heard every day, on the phones, mostly at the doors, from our constituents and from Canadians all over Canada about their priorities.

Our priorities were never secret; they were laid out clearly and concisely in the platform. This government has done more for seniors than any other. Increasing the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors is one of the measures that we are putting forward, and we are very proud of that. We are also proud of incentives such as the tax free savings account for seniors and others.

We have all heard about these priorities and I think Canadians elected this strong, stable, national Conservative majority government to get those things done.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate my new colleague from Mississauga South for her maiden speech.

Many of us in this place today are new, and many will have opportunities in the upcoming days and weeks to give their maiden speeches and present their views to Canadians from coast to coast to coast on what they want to see in the configuration of this great country of Canada.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Mississauga South for sharing some of her views, but I do have a question. Throughout the campaign, I heard in my own riding and I am certain the member for Mississauga South heard in her riding as well about our plans to eliminate political subsidies, taxpayer subsidies for political parties. I would like my colleague to please share her thoughts on what she heard during the campaign on our government's plan to eliminate political subsidies for political parties

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to my colleague that our government always stands for fairness and accountability in the electoral process. That is why it is a priority for us to end subsidies to political parties. We believe that will ensure the fairness of the system. That is why we are going forward with this very important platform issue.

The Address

Frankly, that was part of a plan that respected Canadians. That was all about tax fairness. That was about jobs and low taxes. That all fits in with respect for the taxpayer and making sure that we do what we say we will do and get things done for Canadians, working hard for Canadians.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): It is good to be back, and congratulations, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Before I welcome the hon. member, I would first like to thank the people of Gatineau for having again placed their confidence in me in such large numbers. They have also shown their support for the message of change promoted by my party and the official opposition throughout the campaign. They will always be my priority and I will not forget them over the next four years.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the hon. member for Mississauga South. I have some idea of what she must be feeling today. It was seven years ago for me, but it remains an unforgettable moment.

I listened closely to the Speech from the Throne and to the motion from the member for Mississauga South in response to that speech. And while I admit that certain elements of her motion touched on things that we brought forward throughout the campaign, I am worried, as the critic for the status of women, to see very little on that topic. Can the member tell me if the government is taking this matter seriously?

• (1625)

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, looking at this House, it speaks for itself. Some 75 female members of Parliament have been elected. That is fantastic.

This government is committed to serving all Canadians and making sure that its priorities remain low taxes and job creation.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Governor General for his gracious remarks. I am happy and honoured to second the motion of my colleague, the hon. member for Mississauga South, regarding the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I also want to thank the Prime Minister for giving me the opportunity to do so.

It is an honour to continue to serve my constituents here in the 41st Parliament. I am proud to be part of a government that has always focused on priorities, a government that has always been dedicated to the priorities of Canadians.

My hon. colleague spoke about our government's plan to stay on track during the economic recovery. This is the number one priority for Canadians, which is why it will remain the number one priority for our government.

The Address

In support of my hon. colleague's motion, I would like to point out some other key features of our government's agenda, which was outlined by His Excellency.

These are priorities of another kind, but no less important to the well-being of Canadians. These priorities are at the heart of the principles of peace, order and good government that we must ensure are respected in our country.

Our government has always believed that it is our most solemn duty to protect Canadians, to ensure their personal safety, to secure our borders and to defend our country. We also believe that our government must be accountable to Canadians as it accomplishes these tasks and fulfills its duties.

Our government is taking action and will continue to advance these priorities. Our constituents expect us to do so. That is why I was pleased to hear His Excellency briefly summarize the next steps in our government's law and order agenda.

As the Prime Minister has said, Canadians deserve to feel safe in their homes. They want to be able to walk the streets without constantly looking over their shoulders. They expect to find their vehicles where they parked them. The constituents of Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière believe in the rehabilitation of criminals, but we must also ensure that the rights of criminals do not take precedence over the rights of law-abiding citizens. We must support victims' rights.

Despite the many obstacles, our government has already made considerable progress toward these goals. We are now well positioned to implement all the measures of our crime-fighting agenda.

His Excellency spoke about measures to protect children from sex offenders, to help at-risk youth avoid gangs and criminal activity, and to encourage courts to impose tougher sentences for those who abuse seniors.

We will take swift and decisive action to tackle these problems and other serious issues. We will focus on protecting the most vulnerable people in society. We will work to restore Canadians' confidence in the fairness of our justice system.

Both expert advisers and my constituents in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière support what our government is doing to fight crime. They believe that even one victim of crime is one too many. They believe that a sentence must reflect the severity of the crime. They believe that our system should put public safety first.

Canadians know they can trust our government to act according to these principles. They know that we are committed to ensuring their safety. They know that we are determined to protect our country and defend the principles on which it was founded.

Canadians cherish our tradition of tolerance and harmony. We welcome newcomers who seek to build a better future for themselves and their families. We know they are a key factor in ensuring the strength of our economy and our communities. That is why Canadians support our government's efforts to secure our borders and protect the integrity of our immigration system.

● (1630)

Canadians support our plan to crack down on human smuggling, which dissuades criminals who put the lives of immigrants in danger and abuse our country's generosity. New Canadians often understand better than anyone the importance of taking action. They followed the rules to come and establish themselves in this country. They know what it means to be Canadian. They share our government's desire to ensure that Canadians have confidence in our immigration system.

His Excellency mentioned other measures that will advance the values we share as Canadians. I am proud of our government's plan to create a new office of religious freedom.

As the Prime Minister said, respect for religious pluralism is inextricably linked to democratic development. By defending the rights of religious minorities throughout the world, we are promoting the universal principles of human rights, which are rights that new Canadians deeply appreciate, sometimes because of the persecution they endured in their home countries.

The values that we cherish as Canadians—liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law—have always guided our actions abroad. They led us to join our allies in protecting the people of Libya, and they will guide us when we hold a parliamentary debate on the future of this mission. They lead us to continue to protect the homes and rights of Canadians. That is why our government will continue to support our men and women in uniform. We will honour our veterans, our heroes, who are the greatest Canadians. We will continue to defend our national sovereignty, particularly in Canada's north. For our government, defending our country also means promoting our shared history and protecting our natural heritage.

Our government is eager to invite Canadians to celebrate Her Majesty's the Queen's diamond jubilee in 2012. We share Canadians' enthusiasm for the idea of welcoming their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in a few weeks.

We will also be proud to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812, an extremely important event in the development of our Canadian identity. We will commemorate these events while looking forward to the future, and we will build on our achievements.

Our government has an impressive track record when it comes to preserving our country's magnificent lands and waters.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of our national parks system, we are taking steps to create new national parks, including a new urban park in the Rouge Valley in the greater Toronto area.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the measures that will enhance integrity and accountability within the government, as announced today by His Excellency.

Our government was first elected on its promise of accountability. The first legislation it introduced was the Federal Accountability Act. Through conversations I have had with my constituents in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, I know that this government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, has proven itself worthy of the trust of Canadians. As the Prime Minister said this week, we are determined to keep earning that trust.

As part of our efforts, we will take measures to reform the Senate and restore fair representation in the House of Commons.

Canadians want our government to remain focused on the economy.

● (1635)

They also expect us to protect the rights of law-abiding citizens, strengthen our national sovereignty, defend and celebrate the values that unite us as Canadians, and continue ensuring integrity and accountability in government.

Canadians have given our government a mandate to implement our plan in order to achieve the objectives presented today by the Governor General.

I encourage all hon. members of this House to support today's motion. For me it is both an honour and a pleasure to support the motion on the occasion in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I am thrilled to be in this place and to be a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. Also, I very much thank the people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour who have shown confidence in me in the last election, sending me here to speak on their behalf and to work on making their lives and communities stronger.

I do have a question. I am struck by the ambitious program that the government has talked about with respect to trade. I, as a member of the opposition, am quite prepared and anxious to work with it to ensure that any agreements are strong. However, the government's history is not a good one in terms of negotiating strong agreements.

On behalf of working people and communities in Canada, will the hon. member make a commitment to the House to work with members to ensure that the—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and congratulate him on having been elected.

Yes, we will be working together with all members in the House for the good of Canadians in the very near future. I invite the opposition to vote in favour of our budget next week.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on having been re-elected. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Bourassa who have given me a sixth mandate here in the House. It is truly a privilege to be here as a parliamentarian.

The Address

Now, here is the problem, and we have seen it before. There are plenty of fine ideas. This is a cut and paste version of what we were hearing for months before, but I would like to speak in more concrete terms. If the government is here for the people, there are people from the Montérégie area who would like to see their parked cars again, but with the flooding, their cars are gone. They have the feeling that the government has deserted them.

Would the parliamentary secretary agree that the Prime Minister should go to the Montérégie area himself? Will the army be given a new mandate to help clean up and to work to improve the lives of these people in the Montérégie area? What does he think?

● (1640)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and congratulate him on his election.

We have a great deal of sympathy for the people of Montérégie and other Canadians who have been affected by extremely serious natural disasters. Of course, we also support the members of our armed forces who are doing excellent work throughout the country to help all these people. There have been no serious injuries or deaths. I would like to commend our armed forces who are working hard to ensure the safety of Canadians.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Bourassa, I would like to begin by warmly thanking the constituents in my riding of Richmond—Arthabaska for giving me a fourth mandate. Clearly, I would have preferred a different seat here, one that was closer. However, democracy being what it is, I will obviously roll up my sleeves and make sure that my colleagues and I will be heard and that the needs of our constituents will also be heard.

Like the hon. member for Bourassa, my question is about current events. Can the member who just spoke tell me why, exactly, the government still, to this day, has not announced compensation for those currently affected by the flooding in the Montérégie area?

Not only has no compensation for the people in the Montérégie area been announced, but no compensation has been paid yet to the people who had to deal with the flooding caused by high tides in the Gaspé months ago.

I would like to hear his response. How could this not be part of the Speech from the Throne? I hope to see something on it soon.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I also congratulate my riding neighbour on his election.

Quebec and Canada have agreements for dealing with disasters, and we will work in accordance with the existing agreements.

*The Address**[English]*

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I congratulate you on your election as Speaker and wish you well in the chair.

I also thank the voters of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for giving me the great honour of representing them in this chamber. I will work hard to ensure their concerns are always front and centre in my work here.

Having listened to the throne speech and the debate thus far, my question for the parliamentary secretary is about pensions. In the Speech from the Throne, the government has chosen to ignore the first choice of most Canadians, and that is to strengthen the Canada pension plan. Instead, the government is pushing forward with a plan that will see Bay Street scoop up a significant portion of any increase in retirement savings in its fees taken out of the hard-earned income of Canadians.

As well, the speech promises only a half measure for the many seniors who struggle right now everyday to make ends meet, in my riding and across the country.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell us why the government refuses to support the urgent, affordable and truly Canadian policy of lifting all seniors out of poverty immediately?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and congratulate him on his election.

The financial security of all Canadians is important to us, and I will repeat that the upcoming budget will support our most vulnerable seniors, with help for over 680,000 of them. I hope that my colleague will support this budget.

● (1645)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to once again welcome all members to the House.

[English]

"Welcome back", is what I am trying to say in French.

[Translation]

I would like to tell my hon. colleague, who was also here during the previous parliament, that we have really focused on making job creation and job growth in all regions of Canada our top priority for the benefit of Canadians. The throne speech also talked about how

we will reduce tax rates for Canadians and addressed the important matter of subsidies to federal political parties. That will be very beneficial for Quebec.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary, who is from Quebec and who is part of our Canadian family, could tell us what he thinks of our decision to eliminate subsidies to political parties?

Before he replies, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the citizens of Saint Boniface in Manitoba for once again placing their trust in me in this new parliament.

I would now like to hear from the parliamentary secretary on the question of subsidies to political parties.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question and congratulate her on her re-election.

Political parties can be subsidized in three ways: the per-vote allocation, tax credits for donations and reimbursements for electoral expenses. We believe that these last two ways should be more than sufficient, and we will phase out the per-vote allocation to give political parties time to adapt to the new reality. Abolishing the \$2 per vote allocation to political parties will allow us to save Canadian taxpayers close to \$30 million.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour as leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and seconded by the member for Sherbrooke, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

(On motion of Mr. Jack Layton the debate was adjourned)

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Speaker: Following the adjournment of the House, I invite all hon. members to a reception being held in the Hall of Honour to mark the opening of the 41st Parliament.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 2 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today.

(The House adjourned at 4:48 p.m.)

APPENDIX

**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS WITH THEIR
CONSTITUENCIES, PROVINCE OF CONSTITUENCY
AND POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS;
COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE,
THE MINISTRY AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**

CHAIR OCCUPANTS

The Speaker

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	Alberta	CPC
Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	Ontario	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	Ontario	CPC
Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	Nunavut	Nunavut	CPC
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	British Columbia	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	Ontario	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	Ontario	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	Ontario	NDP
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	New Brunswick	CPC
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	Ontario	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	Ontario	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	Alberta	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	Alberta	CPC
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	Saskatchewan	CPC
Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	Ontario	NDP
Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley	Nova Scotia	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	New Brunswick	CPC
Ashton, Niki	Churchill	Manitoba	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	Ontario	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	British Columbia	NDP
Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	Québec	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	Québec	NDP
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	Ontario	CPC
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	Manitoba	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Ontario	Lib.
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	Québec	BQ
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Ontario	Lib.
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	Alberta	CPC
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	Québec	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	Québec	CPC
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	Northwest Territories	NDP
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	Manitoba	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	Québec	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	Québec	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	Québec	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	Saskatchewan	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Boivin, Françoise.....	Gatineau.....	Québec.....	NDP
Borg, Charmaine.....	Terrebonne—Blainville.....	Québec.....	NDP
Boughen, Ray.....	Palliser.....	Saskatchewan.....	CPC
Boulerice, Alexandre.....	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.....	Québec.....	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine.....	Hochelaga.....	Québec.....	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik.....	Saint-Jean.....	Québec.....	NDP
Braid, Peter.....	Kitchener—Waterloo.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry.....	Yorkton—Melville.....	Saskatchewan.....	CPC
Brisson, Hon. Scott.....	Kings—Hants.....	Nova Scotia.....	Lib.
Brousseau, Ruth Ellen.....	Berthier—Maskinongé.....	Québec.....	NDP
Brown, Gordon.....	Leeds—Grenville.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.....	Newmarket—Aurora.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Brown, Patrick.....	Barrie.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Bruinooze, Rod.....	Winnipeg South.....	Manitoba.....	CPC
Butt, Brad.....	Mississauga—Streetsville.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Byrne, Hon. Gerry.....	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.....	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	Lib.
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.....	Oak Ridges—Markham.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Calkins, Blaine.....	Wetaskiwin.....	Alberta.....	CPC
Cannan, Ron.....	Kelowna—Lake Country.....	British Columbia.....	CPC
Carmichael, John.....	Don Valley West.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Caron, Guy.....	Rimouski-Neigette— Témiscouata—Les Basques.....	Québec.....	NDP
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.....	Oshawa.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Casey, Sean.....	Charlottetown.....	Prince Edward Island.....	Lib.
Cash, Andrew.....	Davenport.....	Ontario.....	NDP
Charlton, Chris.....	Hamilton Mountain.....	Ontario.....	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain.....	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.....	Québec.....	NDP
Chisholm, Robert.....	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.....	Nova Scotia.....	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu.....	Pickering—Scarborough East.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael.....	Wellington—Halton Hills.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Choquette, François.....	Drummond.....	Québec.....	NDP
Chow, Olivia.....	Trinity—Spadina.....	Ontario.....	NDP
Christopherson, David.....	Hamilton Centre.....	Ontario.....	NDP
Clarke, Rob.....	Desnethé—Missinippi— Churchill River.....	Saskatchewan.....	CPC
Cleary, Ryan.....	St. John's South—Mount Pearl.....	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario.....	Parry Sound—Muskoka.....	Ontario.....	CPC
Coderre, Hon. Denis.....	Bourassa.....	Québec.....	Lib.
Comartin, Joe.....	Windsor—Tecumseh.....	Ontario.....	NDP
Côté, Raymond.....	Beauport—Limouliou.....	Québec.....	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin.....	Mount Royal.....	Québec.....	Lib.
Crowder, Jean.....	Nanaimo—Cowichan.....	British Columbia.....	NDP
Cullen, Nathan.....	Skeena—Bulkley Valley.....	British Columbia.....	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger.....	Cape Breton—Canso.....	Nova Scotia.....	Lib.
Daniel, Joe.....	Don Valley East.....	Ontario.....	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	Ontario	CPC
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	British Columbia	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	British Columbia	NDP
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	Québec	NDP
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	Ontario	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	Ontario	CPC
Devolin, Barry	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Ontario	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	Ontario	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Québec	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	Québec	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	British Columbia	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	Québec	NDP
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	Alberta	CPC
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	Québec	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	British Columbia	CPC
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Ontario	Lib.
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	Alberta	NDP
Dusseau, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	Québec	NDP
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	Ontario	CPC
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Associate Minister of National Defence	Vaughan	Ontario	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	British Columbia	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	British Columbia	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	Ontario	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	Manitoba	CPC
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	Québec	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	Québec	NDP
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	British Columbia	Lib.
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	Ontario	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Ontario	CPC
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Québec	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	British Columbia	NDP
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	Québec	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	Québec	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Gill, Parm.....	Brampton—Springdale	Ontario	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance ..	Saint Boniface.....	Manitoba	CPC
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	New Brunswick.....	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice ..	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe ..	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Golding, Peter	Edmonton East	Alberta	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Saskatchewan	Lib.
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario) ..	Cambridge	Ontario	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton.....	Ontario	CPC
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec ..	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la- Chaudière.....	Québec	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	Ontario	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	British Columbia	CPC
Groguhé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	Québec	NDP
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister.....	Calgary Southwest	Alberta	CPC
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest.....	Ontario	NDP
Harris, Jack	St. John's East.....	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	NDP
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	British Columbia	CPC
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	Québec	NDP
Hawn, Hon. Laurie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Edmonton Centre	Alberta	CPC
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie.....	Ontario	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock— Cloverdale	British Columbia	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	Alberta	CPC
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	CPC
Hoepfner, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	Manitoba	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	Ontario	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Ontario	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin— Kapuskasing	Ontario	NDP
Hyer, Bruce.....	Thunder Bay—Superior North ..	Ontario	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi.....	Québec	NDP
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre.....	Ontario	CPC
Jean, Brian, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	Fort McMurray—Athabasca ...	Alberta	CPC
Julian, Peter.....	Burnaby—New Westminster ...	British Columbia	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge— Mission	British Columbia	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Ontario	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Interna- tional Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's ...	Nova Scotia.....	CPC
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	Ontario	NDP
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast.....	Alberta	CPC
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	Ontario	CPC
Kerr, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	West Nova.....	Nova Scotia.....	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Komarnicki, Ed, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Souris—Moose Mountain	Saskatchewan	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	Ontario	CPC
Lake, Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Edmonton—Mill Woods— Beaumont	Alberta	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Manitoba	Lib.
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet— Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	Québec	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	Québec	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	Québec	NDP
Laizon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Ontario	CPC
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	Québec	NDP
Layton, Hon. Jack, Leader of the Opposition	Toronto—Danforth	Ontario	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	Québec	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	New Brunswick	Lib.
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	Québec	NDP
Leef, Ryan	Yukon	Yukon	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	Ontario	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	Ontario	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	Nova Scotia	NDP
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	Ontario	CPC
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	Québec	NDP
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	Ontario	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	Ontario	CPC
Lukowski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	Saskatchewan	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	British Columbia	CPC
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Oxford	Ontario	CPC
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	Québec	NDP
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	Ontario	NDP
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	Manitoba	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	Ontario	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	Ontario	NDP
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	British Columbia	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	British Columbia	CPC
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Ontario	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	Ontario	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Ontario	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Ontario	Lib.
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson— Cariboo	British Columbia	CPC
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	Ontario	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	Alberta	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	Alberta	CPC
Michaud, Éline	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	Québec	NDP
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Ontario	CPC
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	Québec	NDP
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	British Columbia	CPC
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	New Brunswick	CPC
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	Québec	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	Québec	NDP
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	Québec	BQ
Mulcair, Thomas	Outremont	Québec	NDP
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	British Columbia	Lib.
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	Québec	NDP
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	Ontario	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil—Soulanges	Québec	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	Ontario	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	Ontario	CPC
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval	Québec	NDP
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	Ontario	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	New Brunswick	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	Alberta	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of International Cooperation	Durham	Ontario	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	Ontario	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	Ontario	CPC
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Québec	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	Québec	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	Québec	NDP
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	Alberta	CPC
Péclét, Ève	La Pointe-de-l'Île	Québec	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador	CPC
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm	Québec	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	Québec	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	Québec	BQ
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	Ontario	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Ontario	CPC
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	Québec	NDP
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Rafferty, John	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	Ontario	NDP
Raït, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	Alberta	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	Alberta	CPC
Ravignat, Mathieu	Pontiac	Québec	NDP
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	Québec	NDP
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	Ontario	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	Alberta	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	Alberta	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	Alberta	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	Ontario	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	Saskatchewan	CPC
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	Québec	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik —Eeyou	Québec	NDP
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	British Columbia	NDP
Savoie, Denise	Victoria	British Columbia	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	British Columbia	CPC
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Québec	Lib.
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	Saskatchewan	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	Ontario	CPC
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	Ontario	CPC
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	Québec	NDP
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Ontario	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	Prince Edward Island	CPC
Shipley, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Ontario	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	Alberta	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	British Columbia	NDP
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	Ontario	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	Manitoba	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River— Marquette	Manitoba	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	Alberta	CPC
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	Québec	NDP
Stanton, Bruce	Simcoe North	Ontario	CPC
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	British Columbia	NDP
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	Nova Scotia	NDP
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	Alberta	CPC
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	British Columbia	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	Ontario	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas— Flamborough—Westdale	Ontario	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	Ontario	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	Ontario	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	Manitoba	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	Manitoba	CPC
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Québec	NDP
Tremblay, Jonathan	Montmorency—Charlevoix— Haute-Côte-Nord	Québec	NDP
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	Saskatchewan	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Ontario	CPC
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Québec	Lib.
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	Ontario	CPC
Turnel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	Québec	NDP
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	Manitoba	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park ...	Alberta	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	New Brunswick	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph	Ontario	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	Ontario	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	Ontario	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	Saskatchewan	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	Ontario	CPC
Warawa, Mark, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Langley	British Columbia	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	Alberta	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	Ontario	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country ...	British Columbia	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	New Brunswick	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	British Columbia	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest ...	New Brunswick	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	British Columbia	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	Ontario	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversi- fication)	Blackstrap	Saskatchewan	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	Ontario	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	British Columbia	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River ...	British Columbia	CPC

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY PROVINCE

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALBERTA (28)		
Abлонczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	CPC
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	CPC
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	CPC
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	NDP
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	CPC
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	CPC
Hawn, Hon. Laurie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Edmonton Centre	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	CPC
Jean, Brian, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	CPC
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	CPC
Lake, Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	CPC
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	CPC
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	CPC
BRITISH COLUMBIA (36)		
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	NDP
Cannan, Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	CPC
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	NDP
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	CPC
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	CPC
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	CPC
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	CPC
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo	CPC
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	CPC
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	Lib.
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	NDP
Savoie, Denise	Victoria	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	CPC
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	NDP
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	NDP
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	CPC
Warawa, Mark, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Langley	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River	CPC
MANITOBA (14)		
Ashton, Niki	Churchill	NDP
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	CPC
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	CPC
Bruinooge, Rod	Winnipeg South	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	CPC
Hoepfner, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Lib.
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	CPC
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	CPC
NEW BRUNSWICK (10)		
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	CPC
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	Lib.
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest	CPC

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (7)

Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Lib.
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Lib.
Cleary, Ryan	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	NDP
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Lib.
Harris, Jack	St. John's East	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Lib.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (1)

Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	NDP
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NOVA SCOTIA (11)

Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley	CPC
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Lib.
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	CPC
Kerr, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	West Nova	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	NDP
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	CPC
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Lib.
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	NDP

NUNAVUT (1)

Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	Nunavut	CPC
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Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	NDP
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	CPC
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	CPC
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Lib.
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Lib.
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	CPC
Brown, Gordon	Leeds—Grenville	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	CPC
Butt, Brad	Mississauga—Streetsville	CPC
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	CPC
Carmichael, John	Don Valley West	CPC
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Oshawa	CPC
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu	Pickering—Scarborough East	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	CPC
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	CPC
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh	NDP
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East	CPC
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	CPC
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	CPC
Devolin, Barry	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	NDP
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Lib.
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	CPC
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Associate Minister of National Defence	Vaughan	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	CPC
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	CPC
Gill, Parm	Brampton—Springdale	CPC
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	NDP
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	NDP
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	NDP
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Lib.
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	NDP
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	CPC
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	CPC
Layton, Hon. Jack, Leader of the Opposition	Toronto—Danforth	NDP
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	CPC
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	CPC
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Oxford	CPC
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	NDP
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Lib.
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	CPC
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	CPC
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of International Cooperation	Durham	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	CPC
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	CPC
Rac, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Lib.
Rafferty, John	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	CPC
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	CPC
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	CPC
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Lib.
Shipley, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	CPC
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	NDP
Stanton, Bruce	Simcoe North	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	NDP
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	CPC
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	CPC

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (4)

Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Lib.
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Lib.
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	CPC

QUÉBEC (75)

Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	NDP
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	BQ
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	CPC
Boivin, Françoise	Gatineau	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	NDP
Boulerice, Alexandre	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine	Hochelaga	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean	NDP
Brosseau, Ruth Ellen	Berthier—Maskinongé	NDP
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	NDP
Choquette, François	Drummond	NDP
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Lib.
Côté, Raymond	Beauport—Limoilou	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Lib.
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	NDP
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	NDP
Dusseau, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	NDP
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	BQ

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	NDP
Gameau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Lib.
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	NDP
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	CPC
Groguhé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	NDP
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	NDP
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	NDP
Lavergère, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	CPC
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	NDP
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	NDP
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	NDP
Michaud, Élane	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	NDP
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	NDP
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	NDP
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	BQ
Mulcair, Thomas	Outremont	NDP
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil-Soulanges	NDP
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval	NDP
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	NDP
Pécllet, Ève	La Pointe-de-l'Île	NDP
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	BQ
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	NDP
Ravignat, Mathieu	Pontiac	NDP
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	NDP
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou	NDP
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Lib.
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	NDP
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	NDP
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tremblay, Jonathan	Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord	NDP
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Lib.
Turnel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	NDP

SASKATCHEWAN (14)

Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	CPC
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	CPC
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Lib.
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Souris—Moose Mountain	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	CPC
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	CPC
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification)	Blackstrap	CPC

YUKON (1)

Leef, Ryan	Yukon	CPC
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LIST OF STANDING AND SUB-COMMITTEES

(As of June 3, 2011 — 1st Session, 41st Parliament)

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Chair:

Scott Armstrong
Denis Blanchette
Kelly Block

Alexandre Boulerice
Peter Braid
Ron Cannan

Vice-Chair:

Jacques Gourde
Pat Martin
John McCallum

Bernard Trottier
Nycole Turmel
Mike Wallace

(12)

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chair:

Harold Albrecht
Chris Charlton
Joe Comartin

Marc Garneau
Greg Kerr
Alexandrine Latendresse

Vice-Chair:

Tom Lukiwski
Dave MacKenzie
Joe Preston

Scott Reid
Philip Toone
John Williamson

(12)

THE MINISTRY

According to precedence

Right Hon. Stephen Harper	Prime Minister
Hon. Rob Nicholson	Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
Hon. Marjory LeBreton	Leader of the Government in the Senate
Hon. Peter MacKay	Minister of National Defence
Hon. Vic Toews	Minister of Public Safety
Hon. Rona Ambrose	Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women
Hon. Diane Finley	Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development
Hon. Bev Oda	Minister of International Cooperation
Hon. John Baird	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Tony Clement	President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario
Hon. Jim Flaherty	Minister of Finance
Hon. Peter Van Loan	Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
Hon. Jason Kenney	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Hon. Gerry Ritz	Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board
Hon. Christian Paradis	Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)
Hon. James Moore	Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
Hon. Denis Lebel	Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec
Hon. Leona Aglukkaq	Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
Hon. Keith Ashfield	Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway
Hon. Peter Kent	Minister of the Environment
Hon. Lisa Raitt	Minister of Labour
Hon. Gail Shea	Minister of National Revenue
Hon. John Duncan	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
Hon. Steven Blaney	Minister of Veterans Affairs
Hon. Ed Fast	Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway
Hon. Joe Oliver	Minister of Natural Resources
Hon. Peter Penashue	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada
Hon. Julian Fantino	Associate Minister of National Defence
Hon. Bernard Valcourt	Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)
Hon. Gordon O'Connor	Minister of State and Chief Government Whip
Hon. Maxime Bernier	Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)
Hon. Diane Ablonczy	Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)
Hon. Lynne Yelich	Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification)
Hon. Steven Fletcher	Minister of State (Democratic Reform)
Hon. Gary Goodyear	Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)
Hon. Ted Menzies	Minister of State (Finance)
Hon. Tim Uppal	Minister of State (Democratic Reform)
Hon. Alice Wong	Minister of State (Seniors)
Hon. Bal Gosal	Minister of State (Sport)

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

Mr. Dean Del Mastro	to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay	to the Minister of Justice
Mr. Robert Goguen	to the Minister of Justice
Mr. Chris Alexander	to the Minister of National Defence
Ms. Candice Hoepfner	to the Minister of Public Safety
Mr. Jacques Gourde	to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec
Mrs. Susan Truppe	for Status of Women
Ms. Kellie Leitch	to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour
Ms. Lois Brown	to the Minister of International Cooperation
Mr. Deepak Obhrai	to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Bob Dechert	to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Andrew Saxton	to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification
Mrs. Shelly Glover	to the Minister of Finance
Mr. Tom Lukiwski	to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
Mr. Rick Dykstra	to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Mr. Chungsen Leung	for Multiculturalism
Mr. Pierre Lemieux	to the Minister of Agriculture
Mr. Mike Lake	to the Minister of Industry
Mr. Paul Calandra	to the Minister of Canadian Heritage
Mr. Pierre Poilievre	to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
Mr. Colin Carrie	to the Minister of Health
Mr. Randy Kamp	to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway
Ms. Michelle Rempel	to the Minister of the Environment
Mrs. Cathy McLeod	to the Minister of National Revenue
Mr. Greg Rickford	to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario
Ms. Eve Adams	to the Minister of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Gerald Keddy	to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway
Mr. David Anderson	to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, June 6, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 6, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[English]

HOCKEY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize the Pembroke Lumber Kings as this year's National Junior A Hockey champions.

Known as "Hockeytown Canada", Pembroke has a rich tradition of hockey excellence. This is the first national title for Pembroke.

The Pembroke Lumber Kings earned the right to play for the RBC Cup, which is presented to the National Junior A champions, by first winning the Central Canada Hockey League championship and then the Fred Page Cup to advance to the RBC Cup as the eastern Canadian representative.

The Ottawa Valley is well-known for its sporting traditions and contributions to the history of hockey. By defeating the two-time defending champion, Vernon Vipers, in thrilling fashion, they rewarded their loyal fans and added a new chapter to the hockey lore of the Ottawa Valley.

I commend the Lumber Kings' players and coaches for their outstanding performances. I also recognize the Vernon Vipers for their valiant title defence. Their defence of the RBC Cup demonstrated the passion, skill and competitive spirit that make hockey the world's most dynamic and thrilling sport.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, a very large majority of the people of Gatineau voted for change, and I said I would deliver their message. Clearly, health is the number one issue for the people of Gatineau, and I promised strong leadership to ensure solid support from the federal government.

There are desperate needs in my riding. In May, at times, it got to the point where the Gatineau hospital's emergency room was filled to

over 200% of capacity, and the Gatineau CSSS had to ask people to avoid emergency room visits.

In 2010 and 2011, the average wait time to see a doctor was approximately 24 hours. In 14% of cases, wait times exceeded 48 hours. We all want a more effective health care system that meets everyone's needs.

From the very first day of the election campaign, the NDP, my leader and I put health care at the top of our priority list. The government said in the Speech from the Throne that it will help to ensure the stability of the health care system and will work to reduce wait times while respecting provincial jurisdictions.

I am prepared to begin working with the government and Quebec immediately in order to give the people of Gatineau the health care system that they deserve.

* * *

[English]

STREETSVILLE BREAD AND HONEY FESTIVAL

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me express my congratulations to you on being elected as our Speaker.

This past weekend I participated in the Streetsville Bread and Honey Festival, which is a very popular local event in my riding. Founded in 1973, it has become an annual event celebrating the historic backbone of Streetsville's economy, which was its five major mill sites along on the Credit River. Honey was included to reflect the many small apiaries existing at the time the festival began.

The festival was run by over 300 volunteers over the three days. Thanks go to local business, community groups and service clubs that donated thousands of hours of their time for this event.

I give special thanks to David Mosley, Sandy Pitts, Lucie Muldoon, Kathy Dineley, Gary Clipperton, Greg Landry, Kevin Little, Christine Simundson, Suzanne Tierney, Bill Vautour, Reg Vertolli, Duncan Wilcock and Al Yoemans for their outstanding leadership of this great event.

Statements by Members

D-DAY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Vancouver Quadra, proud home of the 39th Brigade, I rise to recognize the 67th anniversary of D-Day and to honour the tens of thousands of valiant soldiers, sailors and pilots who invaded Normandy's coast on June 6, 1944 and who changed the course of World War II.

On D-Day, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division stormed Juno Beach facing fierce opposition and Canadian soldiers secured a critical bridgehead for the allied invasion. The liberation of Europe and the defeat of Nazi Germany soon followed.

[Translation]

These brave Canadians left their loved ones behind to fight for freedom, democracy and peace—fundamental values for Canadians.

Their legacy endures as we also pay tribute to our men and women in uniform serving in Afghanistan, Haiti, Libya, Sudan and here at home.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and all Canadians, I salute these men and women and I wish to express my profound gratitude to all Canadian veterans.

[English]

We will remember.

* * *

AJAX—PICKERING

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the people of Ajax—Pickering. Poised between the blue water of Lake Ontario and the highlands of Durham, with its roots in first nations and around the world, in the tests of war and the promise of peace, from Carruthers Creek to the Rouge Valley, our community brings economic dynamism, youthful creativity and enriching diversity to Canada's table.

In the last election, the electors of Ajax—Pickering sent a clear message to the House. They want us to get Canada's economic recovery right. Amid global uncertainty and competition, we need to generate jobs that sustain growth, secure financial stability, unlock new markets and harness innovation.

My family has been proud to call Ajax—Pickering home since returning from Afghanistan in 2009. We are humbled by the confidence our neighbours showed in us on May 2.

As we begin this 41st Parliament, with its justifiable focus on our economic future, I will aim to discharge this trust by hard work and tenacity.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start with warm thanks to the voters of the riding of Québec for the confidence they showed in me in the May 2 election. People voted for change and for MPs who will listen to their socio-economic

concerns and I will do everything in my power to live up to those expectations.

Today, June 6, 77 years after the Normandy landing—as my Liberal colleague pointed out—a day when so many young men and young women sacrificed themselves to defend our values against oppression, we remember them with gratitude, respect and pride.

Let us keep their memory in mind as we face today's challenges and as other young people follow in their footsteps, serving their country in Afghanistan and Libya.

Our past and future veterans deserve our unwavering support.

* * *

•(1410)

[English]

LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, is a fatal motor neuron disease that affects approximately 3,000 Canadians. Eighty percent of those affected by this terrible disease pass away within five years of diagnosis, being unable to breathe or swallow.

This cause is very close to my heart as my father succumbed to ALS a number of years ago. After my personal encounter with this disease, I introduced a private member's bill to have the month of June officially designated as National ALS Month. Each year at this time, friends, family and supporters of those suffering from ALS dedicate their time and energy to increase the knowledge of this devastating disease and to raise funds for a cure.

I encourage each member to wear a cornflower today to show their support for finding a cure for this devastating disease. I would also encourage all Canadians to help us find a cure for ALS by supporting or volunteering for their local ALS organization.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Deepak Ohrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is gravely concerned by the abduction and killing of Pakistani journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad.

Despite threats to his safety, he courageously reported on the terrorism and extremism that have undermined the security and stability of the people of Pakistan.

I wish to extend, on behalf of the Government of Canada, our deepest sympathy to his family and friends and to all Pakistanis for their loss.

Canada strongly believes that the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the effective functioning of a free and responsible media remain a cornerstone of democratic societies and are essential to the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

This murder is a blow to the advancement of these values in Pakistan. We welcome the announcement by the government of Pakistan that it will undertake an investigation to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

*Statements by Members***NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for my first statement in the House of Commons, I must acknowledge the constituents of the great riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl and thank them for their support.

For the first time since Confederation in 1949, Newfoundland and Labrador is represented by two New Democrat MPs in this esteemed Chamber. We may not have the raw MP numbers of the other provinces, but the way I like to see it, the member for St. John's East and I make up for it by being from Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have a quick note for Conservative members opposite. If they look to the stained glass window the furthest to their right, they will see the pitcher plant, the official flower of Newfoundland and Labrador. How privileged they are to sit across from such a raw and rugged beauty. The stained glass window also faces toward Newfoundland and Labrador. I ask members to look to the pitcher plant when they speak of my province. But be warned, the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

* * *

HOCKEY

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first off, I want to thank the constituents of Elmwood Transcona for the confidence they have shown in me by electing me to represent them. I look forward to serving them well for many years.

Speaking of Winnipeg, last week was a great week for all the people of Manitoba. We have been waiting a long time for our NHL team. It built the MTS Centre. We have had the Manitoba Moose and a trip to the Calder Cup finals. We have had pre-season NHL games.

Last week our dream came true. New generations of Winnipeg hockey fans will discover new hockey heroes, the likes of the "Golden Jet", Dale Hawerchuk, and Teemu Selanne.

As the Winnipeg Jets, Thrashers, Moose or otherwise, Manitoba's team is back and we are anxiously awaiting a Stanley Cup celebration down at The Forks.

* * *

● (1415)

*[Translation]***POVERTY**

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again, congratulations to all hon. members on being elected. I will start by thanking the voters of my riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

In 1989, 23 years ago, the House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Canada currently ranks in the unenviable position of 25th out of the 33 OECD countries in terms of the percentage of gross domestic product devoted to social programs. We cannot turn a blind eye: poverty exists in Canada.

The voters in my riding and the rest of Canada expect the government to take concrete action to eliminate poverty in Canada.

*[English]***1989 TIANANMEN SQUARE PROTEST**

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's relations with China are positive, comprehensive and enduring. Canada will continue to promote and engage constructively with China on human rights.

With this in mind, I draw to the attention of the House the fact that June 4 marks the 22nd anniversary of the violent crackdown on pro-democracy forces in Tiananmen Square. We express our deepest condolences to those who lost friends and family in the Tiananmen Square massacre.

We urge China to account for those who remain missing, and to release those who continue to be imprisoned two decades later for their participation in this non-violent event.

In light of the ongoing suppression in China of freedom of expression, freedom of religion and other universally held human rights, we urge the Government of China to abide by international human rights standards and to engage in ongoing and open dialogue with its people about the events of 1989.

* * *

FORMER LEADER OF LIBERAL PARTY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a day when we are welcoming and celebrating the contribution of former parliamentarians, their parents and grandparents, whose memory they are respecting today, I would like to offer congratulations on behalf of the Liberal Party to all those who ran, either winning or losing, in the last election.

We all know that trying to represent our constituents is one of the great honours and pleasures of our own lives, but above all we have to reflect on those who fought so hard and who were not returned, or who wait for another occasion to be returned.

In that spirit, I would like, in this, my first statement as interim leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, to pay particular tribute to my former leader Mr. Michael Ignatieff, the former member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who served in this House with great distinction and who served the people of Canada with great ability. I know he will continue to go on to great public service, as he did before he came to this place and as he will afterwards.

* * *

D-DAY

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we also wish to acknowledge the 67th anniversary of D-Day, the first day of the major allied invasion of occupied France that led to the end of the Second World War.

Oral Questions

On June 6, 1944, more than 450 Canadians parachuted inland before 15,000 Canadian troops stormed Juno Beach in the face of enemy fire. With courage and skill, the Canadians soon captured three shoreline positions.

The soldiers of the army, the air force and the navy continued fighting until August 25, 1944, when Paris was finally liberated. Nine months later the allies achieved final victory in Europe.

As we remember the contributions of those who landed on foreign shores 67 years ago, we honour Canada's brave service men and women who continue to serve today, and we remember that even if they are not physically injured, soldiers can still come home wounded.

We must never forget Canada's brave service men and women and their sacrifices.

Canada remembers D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.

* * *

• (1420)

D-DAY

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 67 years ago the largest armada ever to face this planet arrived at Juno Beach, Sword, Gold and other beaches. It left the shores of England to free Europe. Sixty-seven years ago Operation Overlord started.

Those brave Canadians and their allies did not just stop in France, but went clear through Europe and ended up clearing the Nazis out of Holland, the country where I was born.

In fact my 89 year old mother called today asking me to wish this House of Commons well, as well as all the service men and women who served our country so bravely, and who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Those men and women left this country so that we could live in ours.

I am so proud to be a House of Commons representative, born in Holland, now serving the good constituents of Sackville—Eastern Shore in Nova Scotia.

On behalf of this party and all members of the House of Commons, we salute the brave men and women who have served in the past and who are serving today, and especially their families who have braved so much for this great country. God bless.

* * *

HOCKEY

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for four decades, British Columbians have rested their hopes in their hockey heroes.

In 1982 it was King Richard and Stan Smyl, led by Roger Neilsen and his white towel. We knew they would never surrender.

In 1994 it was Trevor, Kirk and Pavel taking us to game 7. We had never been so close.

Last year during the Olympics we saw what winning hockey gold could do for Canada.

Vancouver has waited since 1915 to see hockey's holy grail come back to the west coast.

I know what I will be doing tonight; I will be watching the hockey game.

We are all Canucks. Go, Canucks, go!

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the Prime Minister, the government and all members who were elected. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Conservatives that 60% of Canadian voters did not vote for them. After the recent campaign, the Prime Minister said he felt an obligation to work with all members of the House. I agree with him on that, but the Conservatives' tone did not change at all in the throne speech.

Where is the government's desire to work with others?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition. His party was very successful in the recent election, and we can see the results of that here today. In the throne speech, we repeated the promises we made to voters during the election. The result is clear: we now have a stable majority Conservative government.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the election Canadians clearly voted for change and they clearly wanted members of Parliament to work together. That emotion and sentiment was very strong. They wanted a focus on their families and the issues that were affecting them each and every day.

New Democrats have committed to work respectfully, to end heckling and to give this place the decorum that it deserves. Will the government commit today to do the same?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are, of course, looking forward to a mandate in which we can move forward constructively on the issues that we talked about with Canadians and to have in this House a debate that is meaningful, thoughtful and focused on policy and on the values of Canadians.

I think we are going to have that in the years to come. It promises to be a very good, productive and constructive Parliament. I know that with our clear mandate, having laid out exactly what we would do to Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Peter Van Loan: —for Canadians, we certainly intend to carry through on those commitments and do exactly what we said we would do.

ARAB WORLD

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): I am sure the official record will show the sentiment that was just expressed, Mr. Speaker.

• (1425)

[Translation]

This spring has been extraordinary and unprecedented in the Arab world. The shift towards democracy is not an easy one. The people of those countries need support. Last month, the G8 promised \$20 billion, but there is nothing from Canada. The Conservatives do not seem to understand the importance of committing to helping these people make the transition.

Why has Canada isolated itself from its G8 allies?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of my time in the House, let me thank the electors of Ottawa West—Nepean and congratulate my friend, the new Leader of the Opposition, on an impressive result at election time. Let me tell him that our government and I are committed to working with him on this and other important issues.

I can correct the correct the record and tell the Leader of the Opposition that over the past few years, we have put more than a quarter of a billion dollars of new funding to support efforts that will be of direct benefit to the people of Egypt and Tunisia. Obviously, we are making an unprecedented commitment in Libya, and I look forward to working with the Leader of the Opposition and his team on this important issue.

[Translation]

LIBYA

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many cases of human rights abuses have recently been reported in Libya, particularly rape. This has happened in Benghazi, Tobruk, Brega, Misrata and many other cities throughout the country. Our top priority in Libya should be to provide humanitarian aid, particularly to women who are fleeing the violence.

Will the government commit to making this aid a priority, and will it help bring war criminals from the Gadhafi regime before the courts?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am equally concerned as the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie about the huge number of verified allegations with respect to sexual violence being used as a tool of war. I can report to the member opposite that I have had good discussions with her foreign affairs critic on this issue.

This morning I had a specific briefing on what we might do in Canada to tackle this issue, whether it is working with the International Criminal Court or providing tangible assistance either on the social services side or on the prosecution and policing side on this important issue. I would be very pleased to work with the

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member opposite on something that really should be a uniting force among all of us in the House, something that is reprehensible—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen tremendous change in the Arab world and Canadians support that change. They want to see their government do a bit more as we heard. G8 countries pledged \$20 billion for the Arab spring. There was no new money from Canada. There is nothing for Tunisia and nothing for Egypt. The government broke its 2008 throne speech promise to create a democratic development institute.

So, why is Canada not supporting these new democracies and why is the government out of step with the rest of the world?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can report, obviously, that Canada remains incredibly supportive of the change that we have seen going on in both Tunisia and Egypt. We have come forward with funds to support some initiatives with respect to young people in Egypt.

When the Prime Minister attended the G8 in France, he was certainly underlining the support that we are giving to Libya, both militarily and in humanitarian assistance. We are engaged.

We are providing a lot of funding, more than a quarter of a million dollars in recent years, to the multilateral bodies that should provide this direct support. We obviously are watching what is going on with great interest and will continue to see what more can be done.

[Translation]

POVERTY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the government. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that the government wanted the Speech from the Throne to include and reflect the values of Canadians.

Is poverty reduction in Canada a priority for Canadians? Yes. Is it a priority for the government? Apparently not.

Why is poverty reduction not a priority for the Conservative government?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the member for Toronto Centre on his new position as the leader of the Liberal Party. I know that after the election in which the NDP scored surprising results, he found himself in a position of power and influence that he did not have before. We look forward to seeing him in that role in a constructive way in this House.

As members know, this party and government has been very much committed to improving the condition and well-being of ordinary Canadian families. That is why, through our measures to reduce the tax burden, the typical Canadian family is now over \$3,000 better off on average in terms of the amount of taxes it has to pay.

Oral Questions

Later today in the budget we may hear some more things that—

● (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allergy to the word “poverty” still seems to be there. Again, I congratulate the minister on his appointment.

In light of the statements by the government with respect to its desire to improve the condition of aboriginal people, Chief Atleo, in his statements on the Speech from the Throne, made it very clear that he regarded a meeting between the Crown and the leadership of the first nations, the Métis, and all the aboriginal people including the Inuit as necessary, and that the meeting had to take place on a government-to-government basis, on a basis that fully respected the jurisdictions of first nations and aboriginal people.

I would like to ask the minister why that commitment—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are at a place where we are having discussions with the national chief. We are looking at an action plan that we can work on together and part of that dialogue will be to discuss this very gathering that the member is bringing up. So, that is something we will flesh out over the next period of time. Hopefully, we will come to something quite solid in the fall.

* * *

[Translation]

FLOODING IN MONTRÉRIE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we are tossing these kind words around, the people in the Montérégie region have been up to their necks in water for the past 50 days. While we are tossing these kind words around, the Prime Minister is showing as much empathy as someone having a tooth pulled without anesthetic.

Why does the Prime Minister not want to make an exception for Quebec, which is asking that the army play a role in the cleanup?

In 1998, Jean Chrétien called Lucien Bouchard to see what was needed. Bouchard went to the army. What has happened to them is not their fault. Instead of being attacked, they want people to come help them clean up. What are they waiting for?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, along with the hon. member and all Canadians, we are very sympathetic to the plight of those affected by the floods not only in Quebec but in Manitoba, as well those who are suffering in Saskatchewan.

As members know, the Prime Minister has been in the region this morning. We have Canadian soldiers who have been on the ground within 24 hours after being contacted by the Province of Quebec. They continue to work with the province to the best of their ability to

help mitigate the damage there, continuing their efforts as we speak. There are 500 soldiers there currently and we congratulate them on that incredible effort.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in Montérégie are struggling with the worst flooding that this region has ever seen. After 50 days, when the Prime Minister finally showed up in the region, we learned that, unlike disaster victims in Manitoba and Alberta, people in the Montérégie region still cannot get expedited processing of their employment insurance claims.

Why does this double standard exist for the people of Montérégie?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government understands the difficulties and the stress that the disaster victims are experiencing in the Montérégie region. That is why we have expedited processing of their employment insurance claims. Once I learned about the situation, I made a request to the department. Information is now available on our website.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, back home, the entire Montérégie region is flooded. The people are exhausted. The government thought it was more important to expedite employment insurance to disaster victims in Manitoba and Alberta, and victims in Quebec have been ignored until now.

Can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development explain why disaster victims in the Montérégie region are still waiting for this expedited assistance?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, natural disaster victims across Canada must receive the same support from their government, regardless of where they live. That is why, as soon as I learned about this situation, I asked the department to ensure that the victims of flooding in the Montérégie region immediately receive the same priority processing for employment insurance claims as victims in the rest of Canada. That priority processing is available immediately, and information is available on our website.

* * *

● (1435)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, both our rural and urban communities need help to revitalize their infrastructure. Take, for example, the Champlain Bridge.

The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities says that a permanent infrastructure development program will be implemented, but it is time to take action.

Will this development be sustainable? Will public transit be part of the plan?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has already invested a record amount of money in infrastructure. Our government also has an exceptional track record when it comes to transfers to cities and municipalities.

[English]

Since 2009, our government has committed unprecedented stimulus contributions, which were announced in the March budget and which will be once again introduced today, with improvements, that the gas tax fund will be made permanent. That is an achievement of this government. We are proud of it and we are going to move forward.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s, the federal deficit was downloaded onto the backs of Canadian communities. Twenty years later, Canadians are stuck in traffic, our bridges are crumbling, and our water systems are failing. Friday's throne speech ignored municipalities and infrastructure completely. Canadians deserve a vision, a national public transit strategy.

Will the government act immediately with new funds to deal with the \$123 billion infrastructure deficit?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will recall that in 2007, we extended the gas tax fund by four years. In 2009, we doubled the gas tax fund. In 2010, despite economic challenges and despite efforts to keep costs down, we protected the gas tax fund.

In today's budget, she will have occasion to stand and join hands with our government as we move forward with an effort to make the gas tax fund permanent in order to help our communities right across the country.

* * *

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post belongs to us and is mandated to provide postal service to all Canadians.

Lately, Conservatives have been whittling away at economically stable elements of Canada Post and have moved toward privatization.

Does the government not realize that no private alternative can deliver Canada Post's mandate? Will the government use its influence to make sure management remembers that its mandate is to serve Canadians comes first?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to quality postal service for all Canadians no matter where they live.

Last year, Canada Post began a \$2.1 billion modernization initiative which will make major investments in equipment, technology and other processes.

We are making Canada Post more effective for Canadians, the clients, the people whom Canada Post serves, and I think Canadians will be very pleased with the results.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year, Canada Post made \$281 million in profit yet, it is still asking its employees for concessions. This attitude threatens services in

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rural and remote areas. No private sector alternative would be able to deliver the mandate of Canada Post, which is to provide postal service to all Canadians.

Will the federal government use its influence to remind Canada Post's management that its primary mandate is to provide services to all Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is mandated to provide postal service to Canadians regardless of where they live. Canada Post has made substantial investments in the infrastructure of Canada Post to the sum of \$2.1 billion, as I have already mentioned.

We are working to ensure that Canadians receive the best possible postal service regardless of where they live, and I look forward to working with the opposition parties and all stakeholders to ensure that Canadians get their mail when they ask for it.

* * *

• (1440)

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Health Council of Canada released its 2011 progress report and the conclusion is very clear. The government failed to make progress because it failed to show leadership.

Conservatives stalled altogether on a cost-saving national prescription drug program, failing Canadians who are now facing extraordinary drug costs.

Will the government acknowledge its lack of progress and commit to working with New Democrats to protect Canada's health care system?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my colleague for the next four years.

Our government recognizes the importance of timely access to health care and is working to support the provinces and the territories in their efforts to address the issue of wait times, as an example.

We have increased the transfers to the provinces by over 33% since we formed government, so that the provinces and territories can continue to focus in areas of importance.

We will work collaboratively with the provinces and territories to renew the health care accord and to continue to reduce wait times in their respective jurisdictions.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, health care is far too important for just empty rhetoric and Canadians are very tired of false promises. Leading into the 2014 health care negotiations, now is the time to bring in much needed improvements.

Will the government commit to holding open consultations with Canadians, so that the next accord reflects their values and priorities for health care in this country?

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Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we are looking forward to working with the provinces and territories to renew the health accord and to continue to address the area of wait times, as an example, while respecting the fact that health care is delivered by and is under the jurisdiction of the provinces.

Our discussions will emphasize the importance of accountability and results for Canadians, including better reporting from the provinces and territories to measure progress and guarantees covering additional medically necessary procedures.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after last week's throne speech, we learned that the government is about to disband the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which, since 2004, has been examining the legislation, programs and policies that affect Canadian women from all walks of life.

Can the Minister for Status of Women reassure this House that the committee will definitely remain active throughout the 41st Parliament?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as it is my first time getting up in the House in our four year majority mandate, I would like to thank the constituents of Edmonton—Spruce Grove for re-electing me. They are hard-working Canadians who want us to focus on job creation and balancing the budget.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague and all the women who have been elected to Parliament in the last election.

I can assure members opposite that I will be working collaboratively with all women in the House, including those who sit on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, to improve the lives of women all across this country.

* * *

LIBYA

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the government announced the beginning of Canada's participation in the mission in Libya it said it was an effort to protect civilians. Subsequently, there has been some confusion about the mission's objectives.

We are wondering if the Minister of Foreign Affairs could confirm that in fact the objectives of the mission remain unchanged to protect civilians, and that in any subsequent extension of the mission there will not be a change in the clear objectives of the mission and, for example, the military footprint will not change, including a commitment not to put Canadian forces on the ground in Libya.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Beauséjour on his re-

election and on his appointment as foreign affairs critic. I look forward to working with him on advancing the principles of Canadian foreign policy that express Canadian values right around the world.

There is no change in the military mission. The military mission was approved by the United Nations through resolutions 1970 and 1973 to protect the civilian population from attacks by Gadhafi's forces.

I look forward to debating an extension of that mission with the member and all members of the House in short order.

● (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, France and Italy have recognized the Libyan National Council as that country's legitimate government.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs clarify Canada's position on this?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada we recognize states, not particular governments.

We do look forward to working with the council throughout the Canadian mission in Libya. It has a very important role to play in the future of Libya.

The G8 leaders at their summit in Deauville did say at a political level that Colonel Gadhafi must go. That is an important political objective. We can work closely with the transitional council on this important objective.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has cost Canada some \$300 million to close Camp Mirage in the UAE. We now learn that the Minister of National Defence is planning to open a base in Kuwait, some 400 miles further away from Afghanistan.

Will the minister tell Canadian taxpayers how much this reopening will cost in addition to the already \$300 million sunk because of a turf war between the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the new defence critic for the Liberal Party and assure him that relations between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I are on good terms.

I can also tell the member that his figures are completely wrong. Those numbers are completely false. What we have done, obviously, is to make arrangements to have logistic hubs in parts of the Middle East that allow us to continue the logistic support for the ongoing mission in Afghanistan. That is the intention of the department, nothing more than that.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, throughout 2009 and most of 2010, the Prime Minister repeatedly told Canadians that our military forces were leaving Afghanistan in 2011 in accordance to the resolution of the House. When the Minister of National Defence mused about extending the mission, he was quickly corrected by the Prime Minister's Office.

But in reality, as early as March 2009 the government had put all options back on the table despite what the Prime Minister was telling Parliament at the same time.

Why did the Prime Minister not tell Canadians the truth about his plans for Afghanistan?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell the House that the Prime Minister has always told the truth on this issue.

I believe the member for St. John's East is talking about leaks that are not of Canadian origin and the government has a policy not to comment on such leaks.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are right to question the government's promises on Afghanistan.

For over a year the Conservatives repeatedly denied being pressured to extend our military mission by the United States, yet we now know the Americans made a formal request for Canada to extend the mission in 2009. Instead of saying "no", the government just asked them to have patience.

How can we trust a Prime Minister who says one thing to Canadians and another to the American government?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member for St. John's East knows full well, we have been open and transparent about Canada's involvement in the mission in Afghanistan.

We have debated this issue a number of times here in the House of Commons. We take the member's questions on a regular basis and I look forward to doing so in the coming session of Parliament.

* * *

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is about to invest \$35 billion in a maritime strategy that could create jobs in all shipyards across the country. What should be good news is worrying shipyard workers because foreign companies like BEA Systems want their piece of the pie. The NDP raised these concerns several times last winter.

Can the government now confirm that Canadian shipyards will be the only beneficiaries, the only shipbuilders in this maritime strategy?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the government made the historic decision to build the ships that our navy and Coast Guard needed right here in

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Canada, what that meant was more than 75 million man hours of work for the shipbuilding industry and for the manufacturing sector over the coming decade.

This is a competitive, open, transparent process between several shipyards. At the end of the day, two shipyards will be chosen to do a great deal of work on behalf of the shipbuilding industry, but there will be shipyards and manufacturing sectors all across this country that will benefit from those jobs.

• (1450)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is just the problem. The government says, "Trust us on jobs, trust us on this file", but the reality is that it has been playing politics with this issue.

With this much money and jobs on the line, Canadians must see that there is a smart overall strategy that puts forward the strength of each of our shipbuilding regions in B.C., Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

Will the government stop the political games and look to use the strength of every shipbuilding region of our country in these contracts, so that all Canadians could benefit from this strategy?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the process that is under way is at arm's-length from the government through what is called the shipbuilding secretariat.

We have created an open, fair, transparent and very competitive process. This process includes not only independent oversight provided by KPMG but also a fairness monitor and an international third party marine expert that is evaluating these bids to ensure the fairness, openness and transparency of the process.

At the end of the day, this is a very competitive process. Again, this will create 75 million man hours of work across this country.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is tax freedom day, the day Canadians start working for themselves after paying off all the taxes they owe to all levels of government.

Unlike the tax and spend opposition, we do not believe Canadian families should pay high taxes. That is why since 2006, our government has reduced the overall federal tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years.

In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will build on that record.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of State for Finance please inform the House how much earlier tax freedom day is today compared to where it was before we formed government?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the new member for New Brunswick Southwest in this hallowed House.

The member, of course, understands quite a bit about taxes. That is why we are actually celebrating today the fact that tax freedom day is 20 days sooner than in 2005. I think we all know why that is. It is because we have reduced over 120 different taxes. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. I could go on and on about the reasons—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

* * *

[Translation]

FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government continues to shake the confidence of federal public servants. Threats of blind cuts are looming in the national capital region. Today we learn that the government has already increased the use of vulnerable temporary workers by 100%.

Why does the Conservative government prefer using cheap labour over paying its public servants properly?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this place and I also thank the electorate of Parry Sound—Muskoka for allowing me to be in this place.

The issues that the hon. member refers to involve merely 1% of total payroll expenditures. Of course, we use temporary help when it is crucial to ensure the delivery of services to all Canadians that are needed to meet unexpected circumstances, fluctuations in workload and special expertise. Those are the things that help us deliver services to Canadians and that is why we are proud to do it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in an article published today in *Le Droit*, we also learn that temporary workers are paid half the value of the job. The Conservative government is increasingly ridding the public service of its best and brightest and undermining the economic driver of our region.

Is that what this government envisions for the future of the national capital region: precarious work, privatization and cheap labour?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the main estimates and the budget outline the government's annual priorities with regard to budgetary planning and resource allocation for the fiscal year. The main estimates include details on planned budgetary expenditures of more than \$2,000 billion for the fiscal year.

• (1455)

[English]

We are doing things in a prudent way and spending on things that Canadians care about. That was our mandate and we are going through with it.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has just won another environmental booby prize. Canada was the last country to report its greenhouse gas emissions data to the UN. Canada's delay in complying with its Kyoto protocol obligations is another Conservative failure in terms of the environment. Even Japan, despite the terrible tsunami, met the deadline.

Why did the government not report its data on time?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate my colleague on her appointment to the environment file.

In rising for the first time in this House, I would like to thank the voters of Thornhill for returning me to this place.

The Government of Canada has always fully and fastidiously complied with the reporting requirements of the Kyoto treaty. There was a 15-day grace period allowed at the end of the deadline, which occurred during the election, and we have filed those details.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it turns out that not only were we late reporting our data this year, but the government also decided to quietly remove data on tar sands emissions. It is no wonder, because the data showed a 20% increase in tar sands emissions in 2009 alone. That is more than every single car in Canada.

Will the minister tell us who made the decision to try and hide this information on oil sands production?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first offer a correction to my hon. colleague. We refer to the wealth of abundance in northern Alberta as "oil sands".

With regard to the question, in our reporting of the 2008 emissions the department attempted to offer sectoral numbers. It did not work and they were not included.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change was not mentioned even once in the throne speech. Now the Conference Board gives Canada a failing grade for climate policies. These plans are so disorganized and inefficient that Canada will not meet its 2020 target.

After five years of ignoring climate change, will the Conservatives commit to a national plan that addresses the very real challenges?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I again congratulate my hon. colleague on her appointment to the environment file.

We do have a plan and that plan is working. We have committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions sector by sector and that plan is working.

With regard to the Speech from the Throne, I think my colleague was somewhat literal in her expectations. We reiterated our commitment to reduce climate change emissions across the board.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada released its 2011 climate change plan to the United Nations. The plan shows that actions taken by the Conservative government are projected to reduce emissions by only one-quarter of what is needed to meet the 2020 target.

Does the government have a plan to address the other three-quarters beyond deliberately fudging a progress report to the UN?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): The short answer to that question, Mr. Speaker, is yes. We have a plan and I would advise my colleague to familiarize herself with it. She and all Canadians can visit the Environment Canada website to see how we began last year with the major emitting sector, transportation. We are about to address new regulations for coal-fired electricity generation. We will continue to work our way around the emitting sectors to meet our 2020 target.

* * *

●(1500)

[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's gradual withdrawal from social housing and the fight against homelessness is at risk of causing a dramatic increase in rental costs for hundreds of thousands of low-income renters. Many others will be left out on the streets.

Stakeholders at all levels are demanding that the federal government also do its part, be it through the homelessness partnering strategy or HPS or other housing programs. Will the government remedy this situation?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the new member and wish her luck.

[English]

I also take this opportunity to thank the good folks of Haldimand—Norfolk for once again placing their trust in me. I pledge to honour that trust to the best of my ability.

During our economic action plan, we made tremendous investments in social and affordable housing. Some 26,000 projects are under way right across the country. Unfortunately, the hon. member's party did not support those initiatives that are helping so many people who are vulnerable.

Oral Questions

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are fine words, but they are just not good enough.

Instead of working to fix the problem, Conservatives actually cut housing programs. Last year, thousands of Ontario families could not afford decent roofs over their heads, and almost 70,000 of those families live in Toronto. Make no mistake that this is a national crisis and seniors bear the biggest burden.

When will the government open its eyes and address this issue? We need a national housing strategy.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe that having roofs over their heads is one of the hallmarks to help people get out of poverty, get into the workforce and lead self-sustaining lives. It is good for them and it is good for the country. That is why we have invested record amounts of money in affordable and social housing. Through our economic action plan, we supported the renovation and construction of some 26,000 units right across the country. Had it been up to the NDP, 26,000 families would not have received our help this way.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting and strengthening the long-term financial security of hard-working Canadians. Free trade creates jobs and economic opportunities and that is why we have made it a priority to open new markets for Canadian businesses.

Could the Minister of International Trade please tell us why we are pursuing these agreements?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on being re-elected for a third time by the good residents of Kelowna—Lake Country. He knows, as does our government, how important international trade is to growing our economy, creating jobs and ensuring our long-term prosperity.

Closing the doors to the world is not an option for us. Canadians know this is a kitchen table issue and how important free trade is to our country.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Fabien Melanson, a 15-year Canadian veteran who served twice overseas, has started a hunger strike in front of the Department of Veterans Affairs in my riding of Charlottetown. He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mr. Melanson has tried to have government take ownership of the trouble created when a clerical error caused a lapse in his benefits.

My question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. What will the government do to ensure that this veteran gets the compassionate treatment he so rightly deserves?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his recent appointment.

As the member is aware, under the Privacy Act, I cannot discuss the specific details of this individual case. However, I was given a mandate by the people of Lévis—Bellechasse and today, as the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I commit myself to bettering the lives of our veterans, and I count on the support of all members in the House, starting today.

What took place many years ago was unfortunate and was an unacceptable mistake. Corrective measures were taken. I have instructed my officials to follow up on this veteran's case—

* * *

● (1505)

LABOUR

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the justice department sent a threatening letter to USW Local 1005, ordering the steelworkers to cease their information pickets on the Burlington lift bridge. However, these workers are simply doing what the federal government is refusing to do. They are trying to stop U.S. Steel from taking profits from its Hamilton operations until the federal government's court case against the company is resolved.

Instead of getting tough on Canadian workers, when will the government get tough on foreign companies that break Canadian laws, undermine Canadian jobs and attack Canadian pensions?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite on her recent election in the same area that I come from, and I thank the residents of Halton for returning me to the House.

As the member opposite knows, this matter is one of provincial regulation. However, we are monitoring the situation, as we would, and I speak to the Minister of Labour in Ontario on the matter almost on a monthly basis to ensure that we can keep track of what is going on there.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Governor General highlighted our government was here for all Canadians.

My question is for the new Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism. What steps does this government plan to take to reduce red tape so Canadian small business can focus their attention on growing their businesses and creating jobs.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic growth and jobs will remain priorities for this government because they are the priorities of Canadians. We have designated 2011 as the Year of the Entrepreneur in order to help Canadians understand the role of entrepreneurs, who create our country's wealth. We need to reduce the red tape imposed on them, and we need to do so as quickly as possible. And that is what we will be doing with the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

* * *

*[English]***AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Diamond Aircraft had a solid order for 240 jets worth \$400 million, private sector funding and a loan guarantee from the Ontario government. All that was needed to secure hundreds of jobs and a place for Canada in the modern aerospace industry was a commitment from the federal government. That commitment was denied. It was a major blow to job creation and to the London families that depended on those jobs.

Could the minister explain to the people of London why Diamond Aircraft was refused funding?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to congratulate the member for her re-election and thank the people of Cambridge and North Dumfries for re-electing me to this great House.

The Government of Canada has already invested some \$20 million into this company, through the strategic aerospace and defence initiative. However, as stewards of taxpayer dollars, it would not be judicious to increase that amount by another \$35 million.

After a thorough review of Diamond's request, the company was advised by this government that we could not support the request. The company has other alternatives that it is exploring. We wish it well.

[Translation]

FLOODING IN MONTRÉGIE REGION

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister finally visited the Montérégie region today, more than one month after the flooding started. The Prime Minister reluctantly made a flyover visit, and, what is more, he is not responding to the immediate demands of officials and the people affected. As the mayor of Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix said, "I do not think that [the Prime Minister] understands what we have been going through all along."

The 3,000 victims of the flooding in the Montérégie region are no less deserving than the victims in Manitoba and Alberta. Yet the Prime Minister still refuses to change the army's mandate. The flood victims simply want the army to help with the cleanup. Will the Prime Minister listen to reason?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Forces will remain in these regions during the emergency period to provide assistance to the civilian authorities, until their specific skills are no longer needed.

• (1510)

[English]

The member would know that the regional minister for Quebec attended the flood-ravaged area, as did the Minister of Veterans Affairs and myself.

Our thoughts are certainly with the people of the region. We will continue to work with them as members of the Canadian Forces continue to go about their important work there.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Canadian Forces Day is an opportunity for Canadians across the country to recognize the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform make on our behalf.

[Translation]

It is my great pleasure to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of 11 members of the Canadian Forces, who participated in today's celebrations marking Canadian Forces Day.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 7 of the Special Economic Measures Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the special economic measures, Syria regulations and the special economic Syria permit authorization order formally announced on May 24, 2011 by the Prime Minister.

Routine Proceedings

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to present to this House, in both official languages, a document from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that indicates at the end of fiscal year 2010-11, CFIA inspection staff had increased by a net total of 733 members since this government was formed in 2006. That is an 18% increase, something to be celebrated.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Speaker: I am now prepared to propose for the ratification of the House a candidate for the position of Deputy Speaker and chair of committee of the whole.

Pursuant to Standing Order 7, I propose Ms. Denise Savoie for the position of Deputy Speaker and chair of committee of the whole.

The motion is deemed moved and seconded. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

The Speaker: I am now prepared to propose, for the ratification of the House, a candidate for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 8, I propose Mr. Barry Devolin for the position of deputy chair of committee of the whole.

The motion is deemed moved and seconded. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHAIR

The Speaker: I am now prepared to propose, for the ratification of the House, a candidate for the position of Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 8, I propose Mr. Bruce Stanton for the position of assistant deputy chair of committee of the whole.

The motion is deemed moved and seconded. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, when the House adjourns on June 9, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, June 13 and, for the purpose of the debate on 2011 Ways and Means Motion No. 1, Standing Order 84 be amended as follows:

Section (5) be deleted and section (6) replaced with:

"(6) On the fourth of the said days, at fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business in such sitting, unless the debate be previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the proceedings."; and

immediately following the adoption of the budget motion, the Speaker forthwith puts every question necessary to dispose of the Ways and Means motions tabled during the budget presentation.

The Speaker: Does the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1515)

PETITIONS**ASBESTOS**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from literally thousands of Canadians from right across the country who call upon the House of Commons to recognize that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known and yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. They also point out that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and also blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, these thousands of petitioners from all across the country call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers; to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad; and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put forward a petition from seniors and others from within the constituency dealing with the whole issue of senior pensions. At a time in which we are dealing with the budget coming down just an hour or so from now, it is very easy to distinguish what are the important priorities of the government.

The petitioners are saying that we need to see more seniors receiving higher pensions, as opposed to issues such as giving corporate tax breaks.

It is with pleasure that I table this petition.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the first day back to present a petition in the 41st Parliament with over 1,400 signatures on an issue that is of grave concern to many Canadians concerning animal safety and well-being.

The petition calls upon Parliament to protect sentient beings in our care from needless cruelty and suffering; to ban the sale and use of electric shock devices on any animal to ensure that in that future no person will be able to purchase these kinds of tools in Canada; to recognize that the use of electric shocks as a teaching tool is barbaric and unnecessary; and to heed the advice of credible, world-renowned experts, documented evidence and scientific studies that explicitly affirm that the use of electric shock is abusive and damaging to an animal's physical and psychological well-being.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition from members of the community of Twillingate Island who want more science being infused within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Over the past 20 to 25 years, science has taken a back seat in many of the managements decisions. The result of all this comes down to last minute decisions that affect all the communities involved in a social way detrimentally. I have 193 communities in my riding and they are affected, especially along the eastern coastlines.

Therefore, the petition calls for the government to initiate a public inquiry into all aspects of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans with emphasis on fisheries management, dismantling the current state of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and put in place a model that takes into account fisheries science. Indeed, this is essential for these communities, not just for the east coast, but for the west coast as well.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Friday June 3, the sitting is suspended until 4 p.m. this afternoon.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 3:19 p.m.)

● (1600)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 4 p.m.)

The Speaker: Order, please. It being 4 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Ways and Means Proceedings No. 1 concerning the budget presentation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved:

That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying on March 22....

I rise today to table before this House budget 2011, a low tax plan for jobs and growth, a plan to ensure Canada will remain on the right track for economic growth and jobs.

As I said in this House less than three months ago, implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will preserve Canada's advantage in the global economy, strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors and families, and provide the stability necessary to secure our recovery in an uncertain world.

It is my hope that the members of this House will now move quickly to implement this job-creating plan.

We are on the right track with nearly 540,000 jobs created since July 2009, the height of the global economic recession, and seven quarters of positive GDP growth.

Our job creation is the envy of other advanced countries, with job growth concentrated in full-time positions in relatively high wage industries. While that is positive news, too many Canadians are still looking for work and the global economic recovery remains fragile.

By supporting this plan, hon. members will echo the most essential endorsement of all: the backing of Canadians themselves.

Through their votes last month, their voices have been heard and they said yea to the economic plan that was put before them. Canadians gave this government their support for job creation and efforts that will help businesses and entrepreneurs succeed.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Canadians provided their backing for targeted measures that will help them find and hold onto good, high-paying, private-sector jobs, while improving the quality of life of Canadians in communities big and small.

Canadians endorsed an economic strategy that would help Canada's seniors secure a dignified and hard-earned retirement, through an enhancement to the guaranteed income supplement, and new tax support for Canadians making selfless sacrifices to care for a loved one.

[English]

Canadians said yes to a disciplined and measured plan to control government spending and eliminate the deficit. We humbly thank Canadians for the trust they placed in us last month.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is unwavering evidence that this government will honour the commitments we made to Canadians.

The Budget

Today I am presenting, again, the important commitments our government made on March 22. The updated budget includes all the measures that were part of the previous budget. It also includes two additional commitments we made to Canadians since March 22.

[Translation]

We have made a provision in 2011-2012 for \$2.2 billion in support of the conclusion of a satisfactory sales tax harmonization agreement between Canada and Quebec.

• (1610)

[English]

Also, at a time of fiscal restraint and as part of our goal to continue to strengthen government integrity and accountability, we will gradually phase out the quarterly allowances for political parties.

For the most part, however, parliamentarians who took the time to read the March budget will be familiar with what we are pledging to do today.

[Translation]

To support job creation, for example, this budget includes our intention to introduce a one-time hiring credit for small business. It will provide an EI break for some 525,000 small businesses, reduce payroll costs, encourage hiring and give companies and the employees who work for them the boost they need to fully contribute to the nation's economic recovery.

This budget also includes a two-year extension of the temporary 50%, straight-line accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing or processing machinery and equipment, incenting our businesses to invest, improve productivity and stay competitive.

In the still-uncertain global climate, many businesses remain hesitant to hire and expand. In the Year of the Entrepreneur, we are creating the environment for the private sector to invest again and take its rightful place as the engine of the Canadian economy.

[English]

Creating the environment necessary for our businesses to thrive also requires assisting hard-working Canadians as they make the most of the opportunities ahead.

As was the case in March, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will support Canadian families across the country.

The Budget

This support includes: providing additional support for a work-sharing program that has helped more than 277,000 workers; renewing two special EI measures to assist Canadians in their search for a job, support worth \$420 million over 12 months; extending the targeted initiative for older workers program until 2013-14, ensuring older workers have access to training and employment programs that will prepare them for new careers; supporting the helmets to hardhats program to assist the brave veterans who offer up their lives to protect our country by helping them find work in the construction industry when they leave our armed services; supporting the courage of volunteer firefighters who risk their lives to protect ours by establishing a new volunteer firefighters tax credit; and easing the financial burden of young Canadians preparing to assume their rightful place in tomorrow's economy by enhancing and expanding eligibility for Canada student loans and grants for both full and part-time post-secondary students.

Part of helping hard-working Canadians, of course, is keeping their taxes low as they try to make ends meet. This commitment explains why the average family of four now receives almost \$3,100 in extra tax savings thanks to the numerous tax reduction measures introduced by this government. It also explains why the federal tax burden for all Canadians is now the lowest it has been in 50 years.

We are building on that low tax commitment even further through the measures being tabled today.

● (1615)

[Translation]

Today's budget takes action to help our most vulnerable seniors, who have worked hard their entire lives building a better community and a better Canada.

To provide greater support to those seniors most in need, we will provide a top-up benefit to the guaranteed income supplement. This is an affordable new measure that will provide up to \$600 extra per year for single seniors and up to \$840 per year for senior couples.

It will lead to greater financial security for more than 680,000 seniors across the country.

[English]

This of course is on top of actions this government has taken that are already providing \$2.3 billion in additional tax relief to seniors and pensioners right now in this fiscal year, measures like pension income splitting, increases in the age credit amount and a doubling of the maximum amount of income eligible for the pension income credit.

For those Canadians coping with the added responsibility of caring for infirm parents or other relatives, we are introducing a family caregiver tax credit in the amount of \$2,000 that will benefit more than 500,000 Canadians.

On top of that, we are recognizing the often substantial costs incurred by caregivers by removing the \$10,000 limit on eligible medical expenses that can be claimed under the tax system in respect of a financially-dependent relative.

[Translation]

Our government is also investing \$400 million to extend the ecoenergy retrofit homes program for this fiscal year, giving Canadian families more time to take advantage of grants of up to \$5,000 to offset the cost of making their homes energy efficient.

[English]

We are also helping families lower the cost of nurturing the next budding Canadian artist by establishing a new children's arts tax credit covering up to \$500 per child in qualifying expenses for eligible arts or cultural activities.

These measures that I have mentioned are as essential now as they were when they were first introduced in the House.

[Translation]

We introduced Canada's economic action plan to meet the worst global recession since the 1930s head-on.

The plan worked, as evidenced by one of the strongest economic recoveries in the G7 and the strongest employment growth since the depths of the downturn.

Now, through the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we are rolling up our sleeves to take on our next challenge, as we complete the transition from providing temporary stimulus to winding it down, to eliminating the deficit and returning to balanced budgets.

[English]

The cornerstone of the updated budget tabled today, just like the one tabled on March 22, is strong fiscal management. That budget included the strategic and operating review designed to realize substantial savings through greater efficiency and effectiveness.

With the backing we have received from Canadians on May 2 to guide us, we will now launch that review so that once it is completed we will achieve \$4 billion in annual savings and allow the government to return to a balanced budget by 2014-15, one year earlier than previously planned. These substantial savings will be reported on and recorded in budget 2012 when the review is completed.

This is a responsible, credible approach, one that is consistent with the careful fiscal management that has been the hallmark of this government's approach to public finances.

● (1620)

[Translation]

A month ago the people spoke. Through their democratic power they clearly signalled the need for principled, stable government at this challenging but promising moment in our nation's history.

The Canadian voters guide us as we reintroduce the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We owe it to them to deliver the economic stewardship Canadians expect and deserve.

[English]

Our efforts to ensure strong and sustainable recovery are not yet finished. This budget is the next step to getting there.

It is now time to make this budget a reality, to complete our economic recovery, to set the stage for this country's future prosperity. It is time to get back to work.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian exports are slipping, corporate tax cuts clearly have not produced the new investment that was promised and consumers are tapped out.

With the government intent on cutting spending by billions, I ask the Minister of Finance: Where is the job creation going to come from? Who is going to take up the slack for our economy?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question and I welcome her as the finance critic for the official opposition. I hope she will take the opportunity to review the data in the budget in great detail, see the 540,000 new jobs created in Canada since the recession and see how well our great country has done. Relatively speaking, certainly in the G7, we are leading the pack. This is all good news.

It does not mean we are out of the woods. The global economic recovery is fragile, but that is why we are encouraged when we see, for example, an increase of over 15% in the first quarter this year by Canadian industry, particularly in manufacturing and equipment processes.

It is very important for our country to increase productivity and create new jobs as we go forward. That is incented, of course, by provisions like we have in the budget today, such as the accelerated capital cost allowance provision.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by making the family care tax credit and the volunteer firefighters tax credit non-refundable, low-income Canadian families would not qualify for any help. A taxpayer making \$20,000 per year with a dependant would not qualify for any help whatsoever from these tax credits.

Why are the Conservatives leaving low-income Canadian families out in the cold? Will they reverse this regressive policy decision and make these tax credits refundable?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I remember the hon. member just a couple of months ago voting against those provisions in the budget when he was sitting on the other side and then campaigning against them.

These are the realities of May 2. Canadians endorsed those policies, they are in favour of the children's fitness tax credit and they are in favour of the children's arts tax credit.

We intend to keep our commitments to Canadians.

• (1625)

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members, let me congratulate the finance minister on tabling six and a half consecutive budgets. Even more, let us congratulate him on tabling his first budget for a majority government in the House.

The Budget

This past May Canadians endorsed the next phase of Canada's economic action plan as the right plan for economic growth and the right plan for jobs. They also endorsed support for Canada's most vulnerable seniors, especially the new guaranteed income supplement top-up of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples.

Could the finance minister inform Parliament why swift passage of budget 2011 and the subsequent budget legislation is crucial to ensure seniors benefit from this top-up on January 1, as we promised?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc for his question and for his reference to six and a half, if only that were my height, six and a half budgets.

The member raises, of course, a very important question with respect to the increase in the guaranteed income supplement, the top-up. We have mentioned that today. It will be presented to the House, seeking the approval of hon. members, in this month of June. It is quite important because this top-up will not be available and the cheques cannot go out until, I hope with Parliament's approval, there is royal assent through the Houses of Parliament.

The question raised is very important. We are looking at helping the poorest of the poor in terms of seniors. These are seniors who have worked hard their whole lives for their families and communities, and have no pension incomes. I look forward to the support of hon. members on this matter.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulterice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after hearing Mr. Flaherty's budget, we feel it is fair to question—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I missed that. It is important to remember that we must not use names but, rather, ridings or titles.

Mr. Alexandre Boulterice: Mr. Speaker, after hearing the Minister of Finance's budget, we feel it is fair to question the Conservative government's priorities. It is a government that is continuing to go in the wrong direction by giving billions of dollars in handouts to big businesses, big companies. We all know that, after five years of Conservative government, we are in an extremely difficult fiscal situation. Yet this government's position—its attitude—is like that of someone trying to get out of a hole by digging deeper.

On the other hand, while the government is granting tax breaks to large corporations that do not need them and is not creating any jobs here at home, it intends to cut \$11 billion in public services that provide direct assistance to our constituents.

How does the minister justify giving handouts to banks and oil companies when thousands of workers who provide public services will pay the price of his poor choices?

The Budget

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. On May 2, we presented clear programs to the voters of Canada. We have to take into consideration the results of the May election in Canada. Growth and the economy are Canadians' priorities.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget talks about strategic review savings, which is just a nice way of saying "cuts". One of the key areas that has been cut in this budget is regional development agency programming in all regions of Canada.

I have to ask the minister, why is he cutting the very programs without telling us definitively where they have been cut? Why is he cutting the very programs that the regions need in order to develop economic prosperity and move ahead in the future?

• (1630)

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, the third party in this place now is an expert in cutting. This was the party that in the mid-1990s cut transfers to the provinces. What were those transfers for? They were for health care, education and social services. Liberals did it without notice. They did it without negotiation. It resulted in the closing of schools. It resulted in the closing of hospitals, in the laying off of nurses. These are the experts who well deserve to be sitting where they are in this chamber today.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is well known throughout the industrialized world that Canada is the envy of the world. I would like the minister to answer a very simple

question. How does our debt and deficit compare to other countries in the G8 and G20?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Much better, Mr. Speaker. Our debt to GDP ratio is about 2.4%. Compare that with the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries which are up 10% and more. This is not a matter with which any of us certainly on this side of the House can be complacent. There are difficulties in the world economy. We are pleased that our country is recovering better than some other places. We also wish them well, of course, because this is an integrated economy, a global economy, and Canada is not an island.

We will maintain our course, in response to the hon. member, to ensure that on deficit and debt we get back to a balanced budget, and then get back to the position where we can pay down public debt. We paid down almost \$40 billion of public debt before the great recession happened, and it happened from outside Canada and came into this country, but it put Canada in a position where we could take the kind of action we did in the economic action plan.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), the motion is deemed to have been adopted and the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 4:33 p.m.)

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CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

● (1000)

[English]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the following members have been appointed as members of the Board of Internal Economy for the purposes and under the provisions of the Parliament of Canada Act, subsection 50(2).

[Translation]

They are: the Hon. Peter Van Loan and the Hon. Gordon O'Connor, members of the Queen's Privy Council; the Hon. Rob Merrifield, representative of the government caucus; Mr. Thomas Mulcair and Ms. Chris Charlton, representatives of the New Democratic caucus; and Ms. Judy Foote, representative of the Liberal caucus.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning its participation at: the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, London, United Kingdom, September 25, 2009; the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, New York, New York, United States of America, November 19-20, 2009; the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, London, United Kingdom, March 1, 2010; the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, Paris, France, September 3, 2010; the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, New York, New York, United States of America, December 2-3, 2010; the Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women: the Role of Parliaments in Promoting Access and Participation of Women and Girls to Education, Training, Science and Technology, New York, New York, United States of America, February 23, 2011;

and the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group in Paris, France, March 14, 2011.

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition that has been signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all over Canada drawing the attention of the House of Commons that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known.

In fact, more Canadians die from asbestos than from all other industrial causes combined. Yet, the petitioners point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world, spending millions and millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms, institute a just transition program for any worker who may be affected by such a ban, end all government subsidies to asbestos both in Canada and abroad, and stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

● (1005)

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I present a petition from a number of constituents and others expressing a great deal of concern regarding those individuals who are unable to have their families come to Canada in order to visit. At times this can be very challenging, whether for funerals or celebrations such as weddings, where visiting visas are being denied.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to take more action, so that we can enable some of these family members, who are of good character and in good health, to visit Canada.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*The Budget***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 6 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with this budget, the government missed a golden opportunity to reach out and work with others, and to show the majority of Canadians that Ottawa can work for them.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on the new mandate he received from Canadians, but I will continue to remind him that his majority in the House does not represent the majority of the public. Sixty per cent of voters chose another party in the May 2 election. They rejected this budget which is, essentially, identical to the one tabled just before the election.

[English]

I expect the Prime Minister, of course, to make choices that honour his values and his voters. That is what I would do as prime minister myself. But a prime minister also needs to govern on behalf of all Canadians.

The message we heard from voters this election is that they want us to work together to get results that can bring people together across partisan and regional lines. This budget could have moved in that direction by responding to concrete proposals made by other parties, including our party, proposals to help middle-class families, not just the well-connected insiders who all too often get their way here on Parliament Hill, proposals that millions of Canadians voted for in the election, such as hiring more family doctors and nurses; making life more affordable; securing pensions and retirement security for seniors; and lifting all seniors out of poverty. We could have seen proposals to spark full-time job creation.

[Translation]

Millions of Canadians voted for change, but I see very few signs that this government is listening.

I am pleased to see that this budget contains the long-awaited compensation for Quebec's sales tax harmonization. My caucus made this demand several times during the last Parliament. We are pleased to see that the government has made the right decision.

I welcome the return of the eco-energy home retrofit program. We saw how much this program stimulated job creation, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and helped families save on their energy bills.

• (1010)

[English]

It is a program and an approach to economic and energy policy that I have been urging the Prime Minister to adopt since our very first meeting.

I also want to salute the government for its adoption of a non-partisan initiative emerging from this country's building trades called helmets to hardhats. I would like to thank all of the members of Parliament who participated in the informal discussions that we had prior to the last budget that generated the consensus that will allow returning veterans and retiring service personnel to connect with jobs and employment opportunities in the construction field as this program unfolds.

Where is the effort to reach out to the five million Canadians who do not have a family doctor? We have suggested working with the provinces and territories to tackle this critical issue to provide more training spaces or adopt the CMA's ideas in this regard which suggests that we can repatriate doctors who have gone to work abroad and bring them back here. However, this budget will not get more doctors into practice. Therefore, it will cause millions of Canadian families with sick loved ones to experience inevitable anxiety due to the fact they do not have family medicine readily available. It will result in more people going to emergency departments rather than nipping in the bud an illness or a disease within the family. Therefore, at the end of the day it will cost Canadians more money. It is an issue that should have been tackled and we propose must be tackled.

We are also not positioning Ottawa as a leader with concrete proposals and ideas while heading into the health accord renegotiations. Although we should have heard a vision for the future of our health care system in both the Throne Speech and the budget, one was not forthcoming.

We need to reach out to families who need help with their budgets. During the election we talked to countless people who have great difficulty making ends meet at the end of the month. In fact, many of our members of Parliament met with people who were overcome with emotion as they described their situation. As we spoke with them regarding which party to vote for, their main concern was how they would cover their bills at the end of the month. Would they choose to pay the costs of their housing, put food on the table, or afford the medication that their doctor told them they needed?

These are the intense personal stories that people are hoping we will take account of, listen to, and motivate us in our work here. Household debt is at an all-time high. We should regard this as a critical issue. People are working hard. They are working harder than ever. How many members in this chamber have met people who are working two or three jobs just to try to make ends meet at the end of every month?

We suggested some concrete measures to help address these issues. For example, taking the federal tax off the skyrocketing heating bills that people are confronted with. We suggested capping those credit card interest rates which are really tough on families. The budget was a golden opportunity to address these issues. However, we did not see anything about that at all.

Regarding our plea for action for the quarter of a million seniors who are living in poverty, the government responded with less than half measures, less than half of the investment needed to pull those seniors out of poverty using the guaranteed income supplement. Accordingly, will the government lift half of all seniors out of poverty or will they lift all seniors halfway out of poverty? It turns out it is neither.

I believe that there is not a Canadian who would disagree with that objective. In fact, in a country as rich as Canada, every Canadian, irrespective of political orientation, background, income or anything else, would agree that no senior should have to live in poverty.

• (1015)

Solving the problem is affordable. It would cost us less to lift every senior out of poverty than the government spent in the last 12 months on new tax breaks for the six chartered banks. I would bet that if we could have a private discussion with the bank CEOs, they would probably say, although I do not know if they would do it publicly but I bet some of them would, that it is actually more important to lift seniors out of poverty than it is to give us another tax break.

Let us look at that issue from the raw standpoint of the economic impact. If we were to give seniors a little more money to spend, what would they do with it? They would spend it within walking distance. Wherever they happen to live, they would spend it at local stores and businesses which would prime the economic pump as well as resulting, hopefully, in a drop in the number of seniors who have to go to food banks.

Is it not a measure of failure when seniors have to go to food banks? I cannot think of very many measures of a failed economic policy that would stand out more dramatically than that, except perhaps when children are going with their parents to food banks, which is an equally dramatic indication of the growing inequality in our society that is certainly not being addressed in the budget at all.

[Translation]

This budget does not meet the needs of most Canadians on issues surrounding health care, retirement pensions and the financial burden on families.

It is time to make sure that the 1.4 million people who are unemployed return to work in jobs that will meet their families' needs.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said encouraging things about job creation. He said that employment and growth are key to balancing the budget. Unfortunately, he also ignored our practical solutions for stimulating the creation of good-quality jobs, which include reducing taxes for our economy's real job creators, small businesses; instituting job creation tax credits as a reward for each new job created; and investing in infrastructure that will attract good jobs to our communities.

[English]

I spoke to municipal leaders at their annual convention this weekend in Halifax. They are ready to partner with Ottawa to renew this country's infrastructure. They are ready to build those modern roads and bridges, transit systems, affordable housing and water

systems that we need if our cities are to be successful into the future. They are ready to modernize Canada's housing stock and transit systems so we can become world leaders instead of falling further and further behind as other countries make investments in these areas, which will position those countries, cities and communities much better for the economic competition that lies before us.

Instead, what we see here is an entrenchment and a withdrawal. The government continues to ignore the calls from the municipalities. It ignores their call to work together to create those jobs in design and construction, and to make our cities more competitive economic engines in the global workplace and marketplace.

This budget talks about jobs but offers essentially the same old failed plan. It contains billions in corporate tax giveaways to Canada's most profitable corporations. Billions are squandered when Canada's corporate rates are already competitive. It contains billions for banks, big oil and other companies that do not need our help, billions that too often just pad the CEO bonuses or the corporate cash reserves.

This is not an economic policy that will generate the jobs that we need. The rate of unemployment in this country is far too high. International observers have suggested that Canada risks being in a situation where we could have structural unemployment, in other words a basic level of unemployment, which is dramatically higher than it should be and could act as a real block to Canadian economic success.

What is worse, in many cases these tax reductions given to companies, which have no conditions attached to them, the companies turn around, take the money and run. Oftentimes the companies will shut down the very factory that was making money in the first place and will move the jobs somewhere else where they will pay half the wage or less, where there are no protections for workers who might want to organize to have health and safety on the job, where the workers cannot speak out for fair wages to feed their families.

With this policy and this budget, we are helping those companies to do exactly that, throw Canadian workers out of work and allow workers elsewhere in the world to be exploited.

How can we identify with a policy like that and say that somehow it is good for the country? The truth is that it is not. I will give concrete examples. Electrolux in Quebec is a case in point. Quite often these companies will leave their head office here so that they can continue to take advantage of the Canadian tax cuts but meanwhile they are shipping the jobs elsewhere. Canadian workers are out of work, which means they are not paying taxes anymore. In fact, those workers must collect employment insurance, if they are able to qualify.

We notice that the government's approach to that, which was picked up from the previous administration, is to make it more difficult for people to qualify. There is a heck of a way to save money. People who need help from government because they have been thrown out of work are unable to get access to the help their family needs. They then end up on welfare and, in many provinces, they must get rid of most of their assets before they can even qualify for welfare.

The Budget

In other words, what we have here is a system where a tax cut given to a corporation here can ultimately result in a Canadian worker being thrown out of work and ending up on welfare. How the heck can anyone say that policy makes any sense whatsoever for the working families of this country? The truth is that it does not and it needs to change.

Another example is John Deere in Welland, a long-standing Canadian firm that generated lots of work over many years. It took the corporate tax cut and shut down its factory. We have Vale that went on the attack against workers' pensions.

• (1020)

What are we doing here? Are we trying to help in the race to the bottom so that workers in any country have less access to a secure retirement? That makes no sense whatsoever. The list includes Merck and Xstrata. I could spend the entire day reading off a list of companies that have taken the money and run. A small business will not do that.

[Translation]

Small businesses, which cannot transfer their jobs to China or elsewhere, will use the tax cuts to create jobs in companies here in Canada. That is why we must support our small businesses now. It is their turn.

We have to wonder whether this government has not lost confidence in its employment strategy. We have to wonder whether it is continuing to provide tax breaks for big corporations just to please its privileged friends. If this government really wanted to stimulate growth, it would not make large cuts to balance the budget. Yet that is what is found in this budget—\$17 billion in cuts over the next five years. We are talking about \$17 billion. In what areas will these cuts be made? Health care? Education? Help for seniors? We do not know. There is a certain lack of transparency in this regard. The government hopes that we will not see the effects of its cuts. Will cuts be made to regional development programs? We know who will have to pay the price of these federal cuts. It is families.

I want to say that the official opposition will press the government to balance the budget through growth rather than cuts. Our diverse and talented team will be monitoring this government's actions. We will show in detail the human costs associated with each cut that the government plans to make.

• (1025)

[English]

The real test of the government will be its ability to deliver on its own priorities while respecting the majority of Canadians who voted for something else. That takes wisdom and statecraft. On balance, the budget fails that test because it fails the sweeping majority. It helps out the corporations and insiders, to be sure. I do not want to suggest that the budget is not helpful to anybody. However, it leaves millions of families at the back of the line. Too many of them are without family doctors. Many are concerned about their jobs and retirement. Many are struggling to make ends meet and are worried about the spending cuts that are to come and what the impact might be on their families. We all remember Walkerton and we do not want to see the absence of government involvement in protecting Canadians resulting in tragedy.

I choose to remain optimistic about what the House can accomplish. It is not a government known for compromise, and old habits can die hard, but we have seen some glimmers in some areas, as I mentioned: the HST compensation for Quebec, the return of the eco-energy home retrofits and the helmets to hard hats for veterans. Therefore, in good faith, I will reach across the aisle and say to the government that it just needs to try harder.

Canadians of all political stripes have sent us here to work together. They will not let the government forget it. The official opposition will not let the government forget it. This budget, unfortunately, does not come close to delivering enough for Canadian families. However, we are still eager to work with the government to get the job done.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following:

That the House not approve in general the budgetary policy of the government unless the government brings in additional measures to correct the government's poor record of fiscal management, to address adequately the current jobs crisis in the economy, to address the shortage of family doctors and other health professionals, to deal with the need to provide Canadians with a comfortable retirement and a secure vehicle for their retirement savings, to lift every Canadian senior out of poverty, to make life more affordable for low and middle income Canadians and to address the government's failure to substitute a more targeted approach to job creation for its ill-conceived, across-the-board, corporate income tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment appears to be in order.

• (1030)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to welcome the leader of the Opposition and congratulate him on a well played election.

I do have a question for the leader of the Opposition with regard to the GIS increase. He mentioned in his speech that there are number of seniors who are going to be depending on that money. The fact of the matter is that if the budget does not quickly pass, those seniors are truly at risk of not being able to recoup the money that is actually set aside in the budget.

How is the leader going to explain to the seniors, when he votes against this budget, that they are not going to receive that \$600 increase for a single senior or that \$840 increase for a senior couple? How is he going to explain that to Canadians across the country who are counting on this money?

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the member on her re-election.

We have offered an amendment to the budget that could be accepted by the government that would not only ensure the cheques would be delivered on time but they would actually be sufficient to lift seniors out of poverty instead of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Papineau.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the people of Papineau for once again placing their trust in me. I would also like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his new role.

I am concerned because in this budget, there is almost no mention of youth, apart from talking about young offenders, of course. Furthermore, the speech just given by the opposition leader also made no mention of the challenges facing our post-secondary students.

[English]

New numbers show that the cumulative student debt in this country has reached more than \$1 billion. The Leader of the Opposition waxed eloquent about workers, seniors, small businesses and families, which are all extremely important.

However, particularly given the youthful caucus that he has around him, would the hon. member please let us know how he is going to ensure that the government invests properly in our young Canadians, our future.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member for Papineau on his re-election. We look forward to working with him and all members on the issues that he has just now identified.

He will know that the New Democratic Party is the only party that has submitted legislation to the House of Commons that would address the very issues of which he has spoken. I believe that is legislation that would have wide support across the country. Therefore, I would hope he would be supporting our initiatives in that area which would really help to tackle the crisis of student debt and ensure that post-secondary education, working with the provinces and understanding fully the constitutional framework within which we operate in that area, is able to be addressed by our national government in the appropriate fashion.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other day I met a man at Tim Hortons who told me he was going back to work underground at the mine at age 68 because his pension was not sufficient for him and his wife to live on. He said, "I paid into this system my whole life and I thought the government would be there for me".

I see the budget and I see the government is there for the CEOs. I see the government is there for the big banks.

I would like to ask the leader of our party why he thinks the budget is not there for the millions of working Canadian people who do not have a proper pension so that they can live their lives in dignity?

• (1035)

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Timmins—James Bay on his re-election. His tireless representation of the workers in northern Ontario and the first nations communities there is well known across the country. We are glad that he is back.

The Budget

I have a short answer to his question and it is that it boils down to blinders on ideology. The economic policy of the government essentially is predicated on the notion of sink or swim. That is too bad for someone who decides to go back to work after having worked all of his or her life in the mine. It is too bad for the individual and his or her co-workers who have to go back to work at age 68. Why not 75? Why not 85? The government's philosophy is that it is a tough world out there and one just has to make his or her own way.

We have a different view. We believe that together we can actually create instruments of policies, programs and strategies that can give us a dignified and secure retirement. Seniors are not looking to live high off the hog. I do not know any senior who wants to be able to live the life of luxury. All they are looking for is to be able to cover their housing and their food costs and be able to enjoy a little recreation and have something left over to give a gift to a grandchild every now and again.

We need to have a properly functioning Canada pension plan so that we are not held for ransom by the gamblers who want to roll the dice and take their bonuses and too bad if we lose money. They win either way.

That is the philosophy that the government is bringing to the issue of retirement security. It is wrong. We should make sure that the Canada pension plan is strengthened. We have a golden opportunity to do that in the next number of months with most provinces onside for this idea. We should make that a top priority for the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here for a third term, thanks to the support of my constituents in Lévis—Bellechasse and Les Etchemins. I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition recognizes the excellent measures in our budget, particularly for our veterans with the helmets to hardhats program, as well as sales tax harmonization, which is an important issue for many Quebecers.

However, he now has the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of 680,000 seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement by \$600 per year for single seniors and up to \$840 per year for couples. The people of my riding have been waiting for this measure for weeks and months, if not years. We have seen this budget before. We, the members of this House, have the opportunity today to pass this budget before the summer recess, in order to deliver real change that will help our seniors and to adopt measures that will stimulate our economy.

This budget contains measures concerning energy efficiency. It also contains an important project for the Quebec City region: the National Optics Institute or INO.

Will the Leader of the Opposition support measures to give our most vulnerable seniors extra income, to improve energy efficiency and to support the INO in Quebec City?

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Veterans Affairs. We will work with him to improve life for our veterans and their families. It is a priority for us.

The Budget

As I was saying in my speech, there are indeed some positive initiatives in this budget. I mentioned in particular the non-partisan helmets to hard hats initiative. It is a fine example of how the various political parties in the House of Commons can come up with positive ideas that are widely supported. We support this program.

We want to help seniors. We have proposed initiatives to help seniors get out of poverty. The measures proposed by this government will not achieve that goal. They will leave quite a large number of seniors in poverty. How can the minister justify that? How will he explain to seniors in his riding that they have to remain in poverty because of the inaction of their government?

We have proposed concrete solutions in our amendment to their budget. I hope the minister and his colleagues will study it and support it in order to achieve concrete results for all Canadians.

● (1040)

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. In doing so I also take the chance to thank the good people of Toronto Centre who have seen the wisdom of returning me to this place once again. This has been my 11th meeting with the voters, both federally and provincially, and I am very proud of the fact that I have managed to achieve this point in my life and have been able to receive the confidence of a great many people.

I think of my own constituency and we all do when we talk about budgets. I think of a constituency that probably has some of the wealthiest people in the country living in it; some of the most successful entrepreneurs, younger couples who are achieving great success, people who are doing very well in their lives and see great opportunities for themselves and for their families.

At the same time, Toronto Centre happens to have the largest amount of social housing in the country, as the Leader of the Opposition will well know because of his work municipally. It has a vast and considerable population of homeless people. It also has a number of people who fall somewhere into the middle of that group. So, we have the richest and the poorest and we have the people in between.

The essential message that I bring to the House and to the people of Canada about this budget is that it is not a budget for everyone. It is not a budget that brings Canadians together. It is not a budget for one Canada. It is a budget that focuses on a certain group of people. It does far more for those who are better off than for those who are not. In that sense, it is a budget that fails our vision in the Liberal Party, of being able to talk out of all sides of our mouth at exactly the same time, when we say that the search for prosperity for Canada is exceptionally important and the success of our businesses is exceptionally important.

We have learned the hard way, as a country, what I call the “Billie Holiday maxim”. When she was asked what was the big lesson she had drawn from her life, she said: “I’ve been rich and I’ve been poor. Rich is better.”

Canada needs to become richer. We need to become more prosperous. In achieving that prosperity, both for individuals and as a country, we become more successful, but we are also more able to

share that prosperity and to ensure that everyone is included. Perhaps as much as any member in the House from my time in politics, I have learned a very simple lesson. That is that the water buffalo look at each other very differently when there is no water. We understand that is what can happen in a recession.

[Translation]

When I look at this budget, not only do I see the elements it contains, but I also see what is missing. The budget contains some measures, but there are measures missing. That is essentially the problem with this budget. I also see that this document is permeated by a sentiment that is not good for Canada at this time: complacency. I see complacency in the attitude of the government, which seems to think that, having won a majority, it no longer needs to talk about the needs of all Canadians and that it can concentrate instead on the interests of a few. That is the problem I see.

● (1045)

[English]

When we look at what is missing, let me mention three words: the first word is “poverty” and the second two words are “climate change”.

When we look around the world, we see a world that is far more unstable than the one the Conservatives are describing. We see a sovereign debt crisis taking place in Europe, a crisis that has now become infectious and threatens the economic balance of the entire world.

We saw just two years ago, and who among us needs to be reminded of it, that because of the degree of integration of the world financial system, a failure of the banking system in the United States from people making loans to people to whom they should not have been lending money created a world economic crisis that we can now all read about.

We are facing the same risk with respect to the failure, not of a few homeowners or a few thousand homeowners or tens of thousands of homeowners, but of entire countries. None of us should be unaware of this. None of us should be unaware of the difficulties facing our neighbour in the United States with respect to its economic growth and the challenges now facing Japan because of the tragedy of the tsunami.

Therefore, I find that the Conservatives are playing a game in this budget of what I call “let us pretend”. Let us pretend there is no continuing instability in the world economy. Let us pretend there is no poverty in Canada and no challenge of a shared prosperity, which we in the Liberal Party believe is the central challenge of our time. Let us pretend, on behalf of the Conservative Party, that we know what we are doing, that we have a plan.

The finance minister is asserting a very false certainty in his deficit projections. He is pretending that he knows what the deficit will be next year. He is pretending that he knows what it will be two years from now, and then he is pretending that he knows what it will be three years from now.

The trouble is that we remember the Minister of Finance. We remember that he was the one who came into this House in 2008, after the last election, and told Canadians, “Crisis? What crisis? Deficits? What deficits? Problems? What problems?” thereby causing a political crisis that dominated the affairs of this country for two full months, forcing him to a deathbed conversion of saying, “Aha, now we have to do the economic action plan. Now we have to start putting money into the economy. Now we have to start running deficits”.

I heard the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance talking for a full two years about how vital it was for Canada to run a deficit, how important it was for Canada to take on more debt, that this was a crucial act of national statesmanship. I only wish I had heard those words from the Conservatives around 1990, 1991 and 1992, but I digress.

The only thing missing in the government's statement and its description of the costs and challenges that we will face is the cost of certain key programs, one of which has been covered by the Leader of the Opposition in his comments, but one of which was not.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke a lot about the cost of the corporate tax cuts, which are in fact a significant bleeding of the fiscal capacity of the Canadian federal government to address the financial problems that all of the country faces.

Our view is that further corporate tax cuts at this time are unnecessary to achieve tax competitiveness, which is a very important objective of public policy but which has gone from becoming something that seemed like a wise course in public policy to becoming an indulgence that we can no longer afford.

However, I want to refer to one other item that is not in the list of things, because it relates to a major debate that we will be having in this country in the fall, and that is the cost of prisons. The government is about to take this country on a course with respect to the reform of the criminal justice system that will repeat every significant error made in the United States and made in Europe, particularly in the U.K., for which those countries are now repenting and seeing the folly and unwisdom of their ways.

● (1050)

The government is pretending as if the simple solution to every act of crime and every misdeed in our society is to simply throw the accused into jail and, essentially, to throw away the key.

The cost of that is going to be borne by every Canadian and the provinces and the municipalities. It ignores the fact that our correctional institutions are about to become the largest mental health institutions in the country.

It is a direction for Canada that is completely unnecessary and that is also going to have devastating impact on the overall economic and social health of the country. I can assure the government that we in the Liberal Party intend to fight these measures every step of the way.

The government speaks a lot about its majority. In fact, I think I heard the phrases “majority mandate”, “mandate” and “majority” at least a hundred times yesterday, and I am sure I will hear it a

thousand times before the day is done and before this week or the next three weeks are done.

Let me just remind the House—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Much more than that, for the next four years.

Hon. Bob Rae: I note the heckling. I am not listening to it.

Forty percent of those who voted have spoken, but that still means that most Canadians are looking elsewhere for leadership.

We simply have to understand that reality.

[Translation]

I will come back to that point.

The majority of Canadians do not have the same priorities as the Conservative Party. That is important. We acknowledge the facts: the Conservative Party has a majority in the House, but it does not have a majority in the country. It is difficult for the Conservative Party to accept this reality. In fact, the Conservatives can do as they wish in the House, but they cannot shirk their responsibility to respect public opinion in Canada.

I would like to talk about the options available to Canadians. Throughout the country, a movement that is open to and ready for change recognizes that Canadians want a different kind of politics. This movement believes that the government is there to serve Canadians. It is a popular movement that understands the economic challenges, but that does not believe that the ideologies of the past will help.

[English]

We in the Liberal Party believe that public policy should be driven by facts and evidence, not by ideology. Every step of the way we will be challenging those policies coming forward in the House from wherever they come that are not supported by facts and evidence.

We also know that a great majority of Canadians know that poverty and climate change, words that we in this party insist on using, are realities that we want addressed. I would say to the Leader of Opposition that the problem is not just poverty among seniors but among all Canadians. It is poverty among children that is a problem and it is poverty among our aboriginal population that is a problem.

We in the Liberal Party know that Canada's prosperity cannot be taken for granted. We also know that this is no time for smug or self-satisfied complacency.

When we look at health care and at the issues of crime and social justice that I have talked about and at our tax policies, and, particularly, when we look at the importance of aboriginal issues that have still not been faced up to by the House and Canadians, we must recognize the real and present danger that we are dealing not with one Canada but with two, with those who are in and those who are out; with those who are benefiting from the good things in life and those who are not; those who have a stake, a position and security, and those who have none.

The Budget

These things are avoidable. As Canadians, we do not have to accept this fate. We can lead the way as a country by saying that we want to set a standard for our country in the world and that we want to be at our best in the world. Yes, we want prosperity. Yes, we want our businesses to succeed. Yes, we want to create a truly progressive entrepreneurial culture in this country. However, we understand full well that it will mean nothing if there are still millions of people unemployed and millions of people living in poverty, and if there are those who go to bed at night in a room with six or seven people who wonder, as the wind is whistling through the windows of an overcrowded house on Big Trout Lake, in their aspirations if there is not a better world and a better place.

We must recognize that despite all of our successes, Canada has the highest suicide rate in the western world. That principally is because there are far too many young Canadians, young teenagers, young aboriginal people in particular, who do not see a way out, who do not see hope and who do not see opportunity.

As we reflect on our budgets, they are not just about what businesses or the chamber of commerce think. A budget is not just there for taxpayers, even successful taxpayers, but a budget is there for every single Canadian, whether homeless or with a home, whether on the street or in the most comfortable place, whether living in rural Canada or urban Canada.

The definition of a good politics is a politics that brings everyone together. When I look at the budget, I see a consistent politics that tries to divide, that tries to separate, that says the government is there for some but not for all.

One simple fact would demonstrate this, the tax credits the government has given. These tax credits only go to people with taxable income. It is very simple to understand. I was attempting to explain it to the media yesterday, because they were asking what the difference was between a refundable tax credit and a non-refundable tax credit.

Let me provide the simple facts. Last year 24.5 million returns were filed, of which 15.2 million owed net federal tax and 9.3 million owed no federal income tax after all the credits and deductions. The fact is that without net income, one will not get the benefit of the tax credits.

In my riding, who needs piano lessons but does not get access to them? It is the poorest kids in my riding. Who has problems taking care of their loved ones? Who has problems taking care of their mother or their father?

● (1055)

[Translation]

Who needs the tax credits provided by the Conservatives? They are not simply tax credits for Canada's middle class. They should be for everyone and not just for some. Quite frankly, that is the difference between the vision of the Liberal Party and that of the Conservative Party.

[English]

For those reasons, I will be moving an amendment to the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I move:

That the motion be further amended by adding the following:

"and rejects the government's budgetary policy because it does nothing to improve the worsening living conditions and opportunity gaps facing aboriginal people, fails to present any plan that fosters long-term, sustainable prosperity and equal opportunity for all Canadians, deliberately excludes low-income Canadians from qualifying for new tax measures by failing to make them refundable tax credits, abandons the federal government's role in the development and maintenance of affordable housing, continues to display a lack of federal leadership on health care particularly by ignoring the need to begin negotiations with the provinces on the successor to the 2004 health accord and leaves Canadians in the dark as to which programs and services will be cut in order to meet the government's deficit projections".

● (1100)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment to the amendment is in order.

The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Toronto Centre for his speech and on his re-election to the House. However, I note that, as I look across the House, my colleague has moved considerably to the right.

My colleague indicated in his speech that public policy should be driven by facts. However, it was ironic to me to notice that during his speech he ignored a number of facts. He ignored that more than 80% of Canadians voted against his party. He ignored the 540,000 net new jobs that have been created. He also ignored that on May 2, Canadians chose to elect a national, stable, majority Conservative government.

How can my colleague oppose a budget that has measures, such as providing this hiring credit for small business to encourage hiring? How can he ignore the work-sharing program extension that the budget includes and the support for the manufacturing and processing sector that is here? All of these measures are key and crucial to increasing job creation. Not only will that increase the ability of families to provide for their needs, but it increases the sense of self-esteem and purpose that is so necessary in our society.

I would like his response as to why he opposes those great measures that are in this budget.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say what I said to my friend yesterday, which is that the hearts and thoughts of everyone in the House are with him. We all owe him our respect for the tragedy that he is going through at the moment.

Given the fact that I am standing where I am, I have a pretty good sense of what happened in the last election. I may be slow but I am not that slow, and I can understand what has taken place.

I think it was the poet Kipling who said that triumph and disaster are both imposters. In my life, I have had to deal more with the second than the first, but I am certainly prepared to deal with it. Everyone will see us in good fighting trim in the Liberal caucus. We will continue to be noted for our good humour and our good ideas. I wish I heard more of either on the other side of the House.

Would I say that many of the initiatives that he has described are good ideas? I will mention two. He talked about work-sharing as a good idea. I have more days named after me in the province of Ontario than any other premier in the last 150 years because I pioneered the idea of work-sharing in the public sector at a time when it had to be done.

He also talked about tax credits for small business. Again, this is an idea that we championed on our side of the House. We campaigned very hard for it in the last election. The fact that it is in this budget is a good sign. We believe and want all these things. Our concern is that the budget does not go far enough. It does not take into account the precarious situation in which we find ourselves and it certainly does not take into account some of the deeper sources of poverty that continue to trouble the Canadian economy.

• (1105)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Toronto Centre on his re-election and his appointment as leader of the Liberal Party.

I have a question with regard to corporate tax cuts. For a number of years these tax cuts have been put in place and what is interesting is that the Liberal position on this has shifted in the last six months. I have been here since 2002 arguing for better responsibility for corporate tax cut reductions. In fact, Liberal after Liberal would literally light his or her hair on fire in this place and scream at us about the fact that corporate tax cuts actually create jobs. We never saw that result. We have seen a change of position in the Liberal Party. I would sincerely like to know when that change took place and why.

The Liberals continued to call for corporation tax cuts even when we were borrowing money to do so. The previous Liberal leader actually called for them to be deeper and broader than they are today. Why the change in the Liberal Party position? When did the Liberals actually realize that tax cuts do not actually create jobs? At what point in time and what specific thing changed their position, considering what was driving their ideology prior to that?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I am really glad for the question because it is a classic case of ideology on that side of the aisle driving the discussion.

We are very practical people in this party, as is, by the way, the Premier of Manitoba, as was Mr. Romanow when he was premier of Saskatchewan, and Mr. Calvert, the former premier of Saskatchewan. Governments need to make decisions based on the circumstances they face. These circumstances change.

What were the circumstances we faced before? Our tax rates were at risk of becoming uncompetitive, both federally and provincially. We were at risk of losing investment because of that lack of competitiveness. We had surpluses both federally and provincially and significant surpluses federally in order to deal with the issue.

When my hon. friend asks what has changed, I would say that a couple of things have changed. First, the last time I looked we were not in surplus. In fact, we are now in significant deficit, as are most of the provinces. Second, the challenge we face is to ensure that our rates are competitive, but only as competitive, frankly, as they need to be in the circumstances, as competitive as they need to be in order to attract investment and in order to ensure that there is a viable federal capacity to respond to the needs of the people.

We made a decision some years before the last election that the time for cuts was over. We look at it and say that we have come to a number that actually provides us with a reasonable return. There was an entire debate one day when the members of the New Democratic

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Party were objecting to that feature of the government's policy and kept on reciting numbers, which failed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I am sorry to cut the hon. member off but some of his colleagues would like to ask a question.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor.

• (1110)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was so impressed by my colleague's speech that I wanted to nominate him for an Order of Canada medal but my colleague pointed out that he already has one. I will need to think of something else.

I want to touch on the first part of my colleague's speech concerning climate change. There is no doubt that the facts on climate change drive this debate. On the east coast of this country, specifically Newfoundland and Labrador, we experienced hurricane Igor which devastated hundreds of communities. In the aftermath of that, we realized that climate change is for real and the facts point that way.

The federal government is putting forward regulations for the smallest of communities to get in line with current environmental regulations. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities met over the weekend and discussed climate change. Eighty-four communities in Newfoundland and Labrador need to come up with millions of dollars to fix their systems when it comes to waste water management. Unfortunately, these smaller communities do not have the capacity to do that. Where is the federal government on this? Other than imposing regulations, it is nowhere to be found when it comes to the funding mechanism.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could point out how the current Conservative government has abandoned these smaller communities and how in the future it could help.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, if anyone doubts the democratic nature of our party, they just need to listen to that question.

I spoke to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on the weekend, as did the Leader of the Opposition and the minister of infrastructure.

One of the main points in my speech was about how all governments need to be aware of the consequences of their actions and of how they can introduce regulatory change that can have a dramatic effect on costs for municipalities without thinking through how they will pay for it.

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My view is that there should be a basic rule in Canadian politics that a government, which undertakes major change, whether it is on crime, on the environment or in any field of social or economic policy, should remember that the change will have a dramatic impact on the finances of other orders of government, whether it is an aboriginal order, a municipal order or provincial order of government. There is a direct responsibility on that government to pay up.

It is irresponsible for the federal government to be parading around and telling people to look at all the wonderful changes it has made to regulations on waste water and not be prepared to help the municipalities pay for the cost of these extraordinary changes, which are necessary changes but they need to be paid for.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my very good friend, the Minister of State for Science and Technology.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Before beginning, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your recent election in the House of Commons as the Acting Speaker in the House. I look forward to our time together in the chamber and I trust that you will serve this Parliament with great distinction.

Since this is my very first speech here since the election and since the start of the new Parliament, let me take a moment to thank a few individuals.

First and foremost, I thank the Prime Minister for entrusting me with this role once again. It is a privilege to work with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance on things like the budget.

Second, I want to take a moment to thank my family. My family stood by me during the election and I thank them for their love, their support and their patience, as I am away about five days a week.

I also take a moment to thank the people who came out to my campaign during the election. They will never be forgotten. I owe them a tremendous thanks from the bottom of my heart.

Last, but certainly not least, I really want to take a moment to thank the people of Saint Boniface who, once again, have put their trust in me to represent them in Ottawa. I will work very hard to address their needs and I hope never to disappoint them.

During the election campaign, I had the chance to speak with literally thousands of people. One thing I heard again and again, at the doors, was that people wanted their government to remain focused on the economy and jobs.

Budget 2011, introduced yesterday, reflects that priority. Here are a few of its highlights to support job creation.

Our government will be extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers and processors make new investments in machinery and equipment.

We will be enhancing or extending programs to help businesses keep workers, like the work-sharing program, the wage-earner protection program and the targeted initiative for older workers. We will be renewing programs to help unemployed workers. We will be

providing a hiring credit for small business. We will be supporting youth entrepreneurs with an investment of \$20 million. We will also be reducing red tape by upgrading the BizPaL service and further consulting Canadians through the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

We will be supporting economic sectors, through hundreds of millions of dollars, in support for innovation, investment and market diversification in the agriculture, energy, mining, manufacturing, tourism and forestry sectors.

We will also be investing in clean energy technology and innovation. We will be legislating permanent gas tax funding for municipalities to support infrastructure priorities.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will also keep taxes low and make additional targeted investments to support jobs and growth and control government spending to stay on track to eliminate the deficit, while protecting transfer payments for crucial services like health care and education.

Included in those many important measures are tax breaks for hard-working Canadian families, support for our country's most vulnerable seniors, support for family caregivers, help for Canadians looking to make their homes more energy efficient and improvements to our justice system to make our streets safe, among other things.

In short, this is truly a plan to help everyday Canadians.

This is what Doug Northrup of H&R Block told the *Times & Transcript* recently:

The federal budget...is seen as a "people budget"...As a tax professional, I get people coming to me every year asking if there's anything new that will bring them more money back, and now there is. The average family will see a few more dollars coming back to them and seniors will see it in their monthly cheque.

It is clear that the budget reflects a focus on the economy and maintaining and creating jobs. However, there are some important items I would like to mention that should not be missed.

First, I will talk about the helmets to hardhats program introduced in the budget.

As the granddaughter of three World War II Veterans and a huge supporter of our brave men and women in the armed forces, I am very happy to see this initiative in the budget. This program will connect releasing Canadian Forces members and veterans with opportunities and careers in the construction industry.

In fact, just last week I mentioned this program to my friend Wendy Hayward, who was here for my swearing-in ceremony. Wendy is the mother of Corporal James Arnal, who was the eighty-eighth Canadian soldier to lose his life while bravely serving in Afghanistan. I had the pleasure of serving in the Winnipeg Police Service with Corporal Arnal's father, Ray Arnal. Wendy and her family have committed to helping Canadian armed force soldiers through the pillows for soldiers charity, among others. She was very pleased to hear of our government's dedication to the helmets to hardhats program.

• (1115)

This is what the Canadian Building Trades had to say:

The Helmets to Hardhats Program has a track record of integrating military professionals into the best paid, most respected technical jobs in the construction industry... This program is a game changer for young veterans—we aim to place as many of the 5,200 transitioning professionals as possible each year. This is a cross promotional venture—good for the Military and good for our trades.

Another important measure of the next phase of Canada's economic plan includes new investments in the areas of public safety, security and justice, including: \$30 million for the first nations policing program; \$26 million to support the federal victims ombudsman to give victims a greater voice in the justice system; \$1.6 million annually to the communities at risk security infrastructure pilot program to support security enhancements for communities victimized by hate-motivated crime; \$20 million for youth crime prevention programs; and, finally, a commitment to scrap the wasteful and useless long gun registry that every elected police officer in the House of Commons voted to eliminate.

Here is what the Canadian Police Association had to say:

The inclusion by the Conservative government of a renewed investment in the Youth Gang Prevention Fund... will help provide police services across Canada with the tools and resources they need to target at-risk youth, and keep them away from the lure of organized crime.

With nearly 19 years of police experience, I have worked with countless victims and their families, and I am proud to be part of the government that is committed to putting the rights of victims before the rights of criminals.

To that end, and as promised in our platform, we will provide enhanced EI benefits to the parents of murdered or missing children and parents of gravely ill children. We will amend the Criminal Code to double the victim surcharge and make it mandatory in every case, without exception.

Our government will also reintroduce comprehensive legislation, including: to crack down on organized drug crime; to end house arrest for serious and violent criminals; to end house arrest for serious personal injury offences, such as sexual assault; to eliminate pardons for serious criminals; to establish tougher sentences and mandatory jail time for sexual offences against our children; to strengthen the handling of violent and repeat young offenders; to give police and courts the tools they need to investigate crimes and prevent acts of terrorism; to allow victims of terrorism to sue perpetrators and supporters of terrorism in Canadian courts; and to streamline long and complex trials to ensure justice is delivered swiftly.

We will also tackle the drug trade and drug use in prisons by ensuring that every federal inmate will undergo drug testing at least

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once a year. Prisoners in possession of illicit substances will face appropriate additional charges. Parole applicants who fail drug tests will be denied parole.

As a Métis woman, I would also like to mention how important it is that we put measures in this budget to protect women. Several times women are referred to as the victims of crime. These measures will help us to protect not only the women of Canada, but those very vulnerable aboriginal women who so often are abused or forced into exploitation.

I look forward to a government that will continue to address the needs of those women, both on reserve and off reserve.

This is the platform I ran on and I intend to do my very best to ensure that these commitments come to fruition. I encourage all members of the House to actually read the budget, to see these wonderful measures for our most vulnerable, to actually adopt these measures in a timely fashion so our seniors can get that increase to the guaranteed income supplement, so we can better protect our Canadian people and ensure that we return to a balanced budget and reduce that deficit as quickly as possible.

I look forward to questions.

• (1120)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it give me great pleasure to rise in the House today and ask my first question.

I enjoyed the speech, but what does the budget specifically do for youth? There does not seem to be any mention at all about the skyrocketing youth unemployment rates in my constituency and right across Canada.

Would the government explain what the budget does specifically for youth and to reduce youth unemployment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the House of Commons and I congratulate him on his election.

I am so glad he asked about youth because I, as the mother of five children, am very concerned about their well-being and future, which is why I am proud to be part of the government that has put in the budget a number of measures to help educate our youth so they can obtain those jobs.

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When I refer to the budget, I see student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses who would be working in rural and remote areas. There is an extension of tax relief for skills certification exams. There is support for Canadian students abroad. The in-study income exemption is doubled. There is a reduction in the in-study interest rate for part-time Canadian student loan recipients. There is investment in education in the north, which will help our aboriginal people.

In turn, \$20 million have been invested in this budget for young entrepreneurs. Those are the people who will form the future of our country. They are the people who one day may be sitting in this very House of Commons, acting as our members of Parliament, as our leaders in our country.

I am proud to stand here and represent a budget and a government that is committed to helping our youth move forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member of Saint Boniface is fairly straightforward. Over the last number of months I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, as we all have, and there is a great deal of concern about crime.

To highlight the importance of the issue, I will make reference to one individual who lives on Pritchard Avenue. She indicated to me that she was afraid to go out in her own front yard because of the amount of crime in the street.

I hear the Conservatives time and again talk about getting tough on crime. My constituents want to see less crime in the streets.

The government had an opportunity, through gang initiatives, to try to put young people in better environments and steer them away from gangs. There was concern that the Conservatives were cutting back on those programs.

To what degree is the government committed to supporting programs that would put youth in an environment that would steer them away from gang activities?

• (1125)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague back to the House.

I was a police officer for many years in the member's riding. It is a riding that, unfortunately, is fraught with crime. However, when he talks about people wanting us to reduce crime, it was his party that voted to make house arrest available to criminals so they could be back in his community. It was his party that ran on a platform that had zero allocated for youth crime prevention programs and had no intention of renewing the gang prevention programs that our government had put forth.

Our platform was very clear. We are renewing those programs. We believe in those programs and we are listening to the police officers, including the Canadian Police Association, who say very clearly that those programs are necessary. They endorse what our government has done. The money has been allocated in budget 2011.

The member should question his own party as to why it insists on putting criminals back on the streets on house arrest and ignore the need, and the budgetary need, of these programs and these children.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to say how honoured and humbled I am, and thankful to the voters of Cambridge and North Dumfries for choosing once again to have me come to this great place to represent them. I would like to thank my board and all my volunteers, and especially the Prime Minister, who has asked me to continue to serve this country as Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of State for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

I would also like to congratulate the members opposite, the members for LaSalle—Émard and Kingston and the Islands for having been chosen by their leaders as their party's lead spokesperson on science and technology. I look forward to working with them constructively to move this nation forward.

I am proud to stand here today as the Minister of State for Science and Technology to outline new investments in our science and technology initiatives and innovations that will underscore the government's continued commitment to Canada as a world leader in research, innovation and technology adoption.

In order to succeed in the knowledge economy, Canada must attract and develop the talented people we need, as well as increase our capacity for world-leading research and development, improve the commercialization of that research, and promote education and skills development.

This government has a long-standing, very strong record of commitment to science and technology ever since the release of our national science and technology strategy in 2007. This strategy recognizes the critical and important link between knowledge and the capacity to innovate, and the success in the global economy.

More important than simply having a strategy and talking about it is the implementation of that strategy, that vision. Consequently, our government has made significant investments to attract and develop talented people, strengthen Canada's capacity for world-leading research and development, and improve the commercialization of research in previous budgets, including Canada's economic action plan.

Now, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on these earlier investments and strategies. It provides significant resources to strengthen Canada's global research leadership, supports commercialization of research by fostering business innovation, and advances a digital economy strategy as well.

Science and technology investments included in budget 2011 build upon the more than \$6.3 billion provided under years one and two of the economic action plan. Every single budget that this government has placed on the table, including this year's budget, has increased science and tech investments.

I am honoured now to take the House through some of budget 2011 moves to produce the next phase of our science and tech strategy. At a time, I might point out, when other countries are struggling just to maintain their existing commitments to research, science and innovation, Canada is setting the pace and we are moving forward.

We continue to demonstrate with the current budget our commitment to build a research advantage in science and tech. We seek to maintain our leadership, and it is a leadership position in the G7, in terms of research and development performed in the higher education sector as a percentage of our economy.

This budget this year, as others in the past, will see an increase to the federal granting councils' combined annual budgets of \$37 million per year. We will also add \$10 million per year to the indirect costs of research programs for costs such as those related to operating and maintaining facilities at Canada's universities and colleges that receive granting council funding.

Other budget 2011 initiatives aimed at strengthening our research advantage as a nation include \$53.5 million over five years to support the creation of 10 new Canada excellence research chairs. These are the pivotal research chairs on the planet and are highly sought after from around the world. As well, there is up to \$100 million to help establish a Canada brain research fund to support Canada's neuroscience research and accelerate discoveries on some of the most profound neuropathic disorders facing Canadians and their families.

• (1130)

There is \$65 million for Genome Canada to launch a brand new competition in the areas of human health, as well as sustain its operating costs and those of its centres until 2013-14.

Indeed, \$50 million over five years, beginning in 2012-13, to the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo to support its leading-edge research, its education, and its public outreach activities.

Beginning in 2011-12, \$35 million over five years to support excellence in climate and atmospheric research at Canadian post-secondary institutions through our Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada or, as we call it, NSERC.

Over five years, \$12 million for a tri-council competition to establish a Canada-India research centre of excellence. This is part of our government's wider India engagement strategy.

There is \$4 million over three years, beginning in 2011, to support the construction of a cyclotron for production of the next generation medical isotopes. This will be located in Thunder Bay, as a regional research institute.

We have also set up an expert panel of six eminent Canadians announced in last year's budget, led by Mr. Tom Jenkins of Open Text Corporation. It will provide this government with recommendations on maximizing the federal programs that are set out to promote business innovation. In the meantime, budget 2011 includes targeted resources to improve commercialization and support demonstration of new technologies in the marketplace.

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Some of these great initiatives include: \$12 million over five years starting in 2011-12 for NSERC's Idea to Innovation program to support joint college and university research and development projects with promising commercialization potential; \$3 million, also in 2011-12, and \$5 million per year ongoing, starting in 2012-13, to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council or NSERC, to support 30 new industrial research chairs at colleges. This is a great program.

There is \$40 million over two years to support the development and demonstration of new clean technology projects through Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

Budget 2011 also includes initiatives to make Canada a leader in the development, adoption, and use of digital technologies and content, such as: \$80 million over three years for a pilot initiative delivered through the industrial research assistance program or, as we call it, IRAP, to support collaborative projects between colleges and small and medium-size businesses that accelerate the adoption of information and communication technologies.

As well, \$100 million per year in support of Canada media fund which invests in digital content across multiple platforms, including television, leading-edge applications for the Internet, wireless, and other emerging platforms.

Our government has a plan that we set out in 2007. The real test with anything is not just talking about ideas; it is in implementing them and seeing their success grow. We are not just talking, but we are acting and acting in the best interests of this nation. With this budget, yet again, we have demonstrated our willingness and ability to implement that plan. We will continue to make Canada a leader in research, science and innovation.

This budget sustains our commitment to improve the quality of life of Canadians, create high-wage and better-quality jobs, and enable Canadians to compete in the knowledge economy.

I look forward to working with my parliamentary colleagues and all Canadians to building the economy of tomorrow in which Canada realizes its vast potential as a world leader in and through science, technology and innovation.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government talks about creating jobs in small businesses and says that it will encourage investments in this area. But we know very well that there have been some very clear cuts to jobs at border crossings: A border crossing in Franklin, in my riding, has been closed, which will hurt tourism. Tourism jobs have been cut. All this at a time when the United States is looking at increasing the number of border crossings.

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How can the government justify these cuts, when it claims to want to invest to create new jobs?

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, when the nation was facing one of the worst economic downturns since the great depression, this government's overall initiatives under Canada's economic action plan have produced some 540,000 net new jobs. Almost 300,000 of those jobs are in southern Ontario alone. This is a great announcement.

It is great proof of the effectiveness of Canada's economic action plan. The member well knows that it is not just me saying this. Canada is in the best shape of every industrialized nation on the planet. We entered this recession last because of Conservative policies. We suffered the least.

As the member has mentioned, there are still Canadians who need work. There are still Canadians who have work but want better jobs. That is exactly why I encourage the member to support this budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It will produce more work for Canadians and turn this economy even further into the best in the world.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is related to Canada's venture capital industry.

A key to commercialization is access to early stage investment and venture capital. Some countries are creating the capacity through their tax system and direct government investment to attract venture capital investment. Israel in particular is focusing on the clean tech electric engine, electric cars, the jobs of the future, and the green economy of the future. In Canada the reality is that the venture capital industry is struggling. It faces a crisis. If we do not get this right there is going to be a dearth of discovery 10 years, 15 years out.

Why has the government not put in this budget some of the recommendations of the Canadian venture capital industry to attract more venture capital to Canada's technology entrepreneurs and to help create the jobs of tomorrow? Since they were not in the budget, does the minister have some ideas perhaps on tax reform policies to attract more venture capital? Perhaps one idea would be eliminating the capital gains tax on early stage investment.

I am disappointed that the government did not incorporate these ideas into the budget, but I would appreciate the minister's input directly for the House to consider his ideas.

• (1140)

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, indeed, venture capital around the world has taken quite a hit. This is money used to help start up companies when the banks will not consider them for a loan.

In some ways the member could consider a number of this government's programs and policies as a bit of venture capital. There are a number of programs for new companies to get new technologies into the marketplace to help train the staff who are currently employed, so that they can use new technologies and so forth. The member will know that the government works with the Business Development Bank of Canada to provide that venture capital funding. We have done that.

As well, there is a new program that the member may not be aware of. Since the member is from Ontario, I am happy to share with him a program called the investing in business initiative. This is an opportunity for new businesses to seek out venture capital funding and to help them with angel investment. This is about a \$200 million program. My—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Kings—Hants is rising on a point of order?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order respectfully to the hon. member. I would be remiss and would greatly disappoint my constituents in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia if I were not to correct the minister and remind him that while I have nothing against the good people of Ontario, I am very proud to have been born and raised in Nova Scotia and representing Nova Scotia.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, my apologies. What I meant was that I was hoping and wishing he was from Ontario, but I can certainly say that is not so. However, there is a program available in the venture capital market. I see some of the numbers in terms of venture capital in this country improving and increasing.

As I said earlier, we are not out of hot water yet. Our economy remains fragile, as the rest of the world's does, and that is exactly why we need to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me say once again how very honoured I am to be back in the House and to represent the constituents of Parkdale—High Park, the people who voted for me and put me here. I am very proud to have earned their trust and honoured to be part of a record-breaking complement of women in the House.

I am also honoured to serve as finance critic in the first ever New Democrat shadow cabinet and look forward to a constructive, energetic and positive relationship with the finance minister.

[Translation]

I congratulate my friend on his re-election and on receiving a stronger mandate for his government. But I will commit to regularly reminding him that he must defend the interests of all Canadians.

The reason that the Minister of Finance had all the freedom of his majority government to table his budget yesterday is because there is something wrong with our voting process. A majority of voters—60%—opposed his party and his budget during the election.

Although I respect the government's majority in the House, I hope that he will agree to respect the majority of the citizens of Canada—the real majority.

[English]

Many of the people who voted for change are still looking to Ottawa for help. They are working harder than ever and their household debt is soaring, student debt is soaring, their retirement has never been less secure and they are tired of being pushed to the back of the line.

Four and a half million Canadians just voted for my party's plan to take practical first steps to make their lives better. They voted for better front line health care, stronger retirement security, a break on their family budget and full-time job creation, good quality jobs that will support them and their families. Those Canadians will clearly feel let down by this budget that once again puts well-connected insiders ahead of their families.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Canadians want us to use a constructive approach in the House of Commons. In that vein, I will take the time to acknowledge the positive aspects of the minister's speech.

We welcome the fact that Quebec is being compensated for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST. It is something our party often requested, and we feel that we have been heard on this issue.

We also welcome the reinstatement of the eco-energy retrofit program, even if it is just for one year. As we have said all spring, that program has created thousands of jobs and leads to billions of dollars in economic spinoffs. It also allows us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by millions of tonnes a year. Many families have been able to save hundreds of dollars. This program should never have been abolished. It is a very important program. We must now consider adopting a permanent program to retrofit various types of buildings in Canada in order to make them more energy efficient.

[English]

We also welcome in principle the government's commitment to strengthening Canada's fiscal bottom line. As the finance department itself confirms, New Democrats have the best fiscal record, bar none, across all orders of government. We are very proud of that record.

Provincially, by and large, these governments have built their record while investing in families and avoiding destructive program cuts that other parties here have engaged in.

Federally, we will have to wait four more years to try our hand, but Canadians can count on us to share our best practices and advice in the meantime. We look forward to that.

The \$36 billion federal deficit is now \$13 billion lower than the minister projected in the budget of 2010. It is \$13 billion lower. That is quite a change. The deficit is declining largely because of economic growth and our economy has substantial capacity for more growth.

More than 1.4 million Canadians were unemployed on April 1. That is nearly 300,000 more than before the recession took hold. So when my hon. colleagues say that we have recovered all of the jobs lost since the recession, they stand corrected. We are 300,000 jobs behind where we were at the start of the recession.

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Hundreds of thousands more find themselves struggling in involuntary part-time work. We all know people who are working two, sometimes three jobs to support themselves and their families. This is the tragedy lurking behind the government's job numbers.

We see a steady shift away from quality jobs to less secure work with uncertain hours, fewer benefits and no pensions, the so-called precarious jobs. Getting these Canadians back to work in family supporting jobs could inject another \$75 billion into our economy in wages alone, before multipliers.

Here is how the official opposition would return Canada to fiscal balance. We would do it by investing in quality jobs, boosting household incomes and GDP, and therefore government revenues. We would create good quality jobs. That is a key priority for Canadians right across this country.

We have also proposed reducing the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. Why have we done that? This would give a boost to a sector that creates nearly half of all new Canadian jobs, small businesses right across the country. I think of my own riding of Parkdale—High Park where we have small businesses that are really the lifeblood of our local economy.

We have proposed direct job creation tax credits to reward every new hire in small, medium and large businesses. We have proposed investing in vital infrastructure to create jobs that make our cities more competitive hubs in the global economy.

However, this budget picks up on none of these practical suggestions to spark job creation.

• (1150)

[Translation]

The budget continues to bank on a job creation strategy that is not effective, namely the unconditional tax cuts for corporations.

After lowering corporate tax rate to 16.5%, they intend to lower it even more next year to 15%. It is not really necessary to lower taxes even more, and it will cost the public purse another \$3 billion.

The combined tax rate of the federal and provincial governments is currently far below the tax rate in the United States. These cuts are therefore not necessary. The Department of Finance points out that investment in infrastructure creates seven times more economic spinoffs.

There is no evidence that corporations are using these tax cuts to create jobs. Instead, they prefer to use the money to pay off their debts, increase their profits, give their CEOs bigger bonuses, or even invest abroad and lay off workers here at home.

*The Budget**[English]*

I look at Electrolux which eagerly accepted Ottawa's largesse before shipping 1,300 manufacturing jobs to Memphis. It took the money, put it in its back pocket and then laid off all the workers.

The six big banks just received an additional \$1.1 billion bonus from Canadian taxpayers over the last four quarters. That money is not going toward creating jobs.

Why would the minister expect a job strategy that failed yesterday to succeed tomorrow? We have a job crisis in this country. Why would he plough ahead knowing that finishing his rate cutting experiment will leave an annual \$15 billion hole in the treasury?

[Translation]

After giving big businesses \$15 billion every year, the minister is trying to get that money back by shifting the burden to Canadian taxpayers. First of all, over the next five years, he plans to collect \$17 billion more in EI premiums than he will pay out in benefits. That is completely unacceptable. It is a slap in the face to workers and employers. The Conservatives do not seem serious about their desire to help small businesses and to lead Canada back to recovery.

In addition, now the minister is threatening to cut federal spending by another \$17 billion over the next five years. Focusing on cuts instead of on economic growth is not the right strategy for returning to a balanced budget.

[English]

Let me ask the question my leader asked earlier. Where will the minister find this largely unspecified \$17 billion? Will he cut transfers to health care after a few years? If not now then later on perhaps. Is that why we see no first steps in this budget toward training more doctors and other health care professionals, nurses, midwives? If not health care transfers, will he cut funding to Health Canada, Statistics Canada, Environment Canada or any of the countless departments and agencies that contribute to a stronger, healthier population of Canadians, programs that Canadians count on?

Will the minister make the spectre of deep cuts his constant pretext to ignore calls to invest in Canadian families because the needs are huge? We need to strengthen front line health care. We need to make life more affordable for Canadians. Canadians are stretched. We need to improve pensions for people who are retired or about to retire. We need to invest proactively in job creation. We need to pull seniors not just some of the way but all the way out of poverty. It is unacceptable that we have any senior living in poverty in a country as wealthy as Canada.

These are the priorities that millions of Canadians voted on in the recent election.

The budget deficit is \$13 billion lower than the minister projected in budget 2010. The year before he was off by \$22 billion so I guess he is getting a bit closer. Accurate deficit projections have not been the forte of the Minister of Finance. Canadians are all too familiar with governments overstating deficits to justify spending cuts. This is no time for deep spending cuts.

We are also hearing credible warnings about the possibility of a double-dip recession. We are hearing it from U.S. economists and from the Governor of the Bank of Canada. This is no time to be pulling \$34 billion out of this economy in combined spending cuts and over-collected EI premiums, not with Canada perched on the edge of a fragile recovery.

● (1155)

[Translation]

Even when things are going well, we know that workers and their families tend to be hit the hardest by budget cuts. These families are already worried about their retirement pensions and the bills they need to pay at the end of the month. These families need high-quality jobs to contribute to Canada's economic recovery. Instead of shifting the burden onto them, we should be making investments that benefit these families, taking affordable and effective action, and creating jobs to stimulate growth and increase income in order to achieve a balanced budget in the long term.

[English]

The government needs to remember that it governs for all Canadians, not just well-connected Conservative insiders, not even just for its own voters, but for all Canadians, and certainly they include the sweeping majority of Canadians who want to see parties work together in the House of Commons. The sweeping majority of Canadians want to see solutions that bring people together across party lines and across regional lines.

We are ready to do our part. However, if the government wants to meet the challenge with us, it is going to have to do much better than it has done in the budget.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to welcome my colleague.

I would like to speak about the employment insurance premiums and the SMEs that she mentioned in the same breath. She did not hesitate to criticize our small EI premium increases, but I wonder if she remembers that, in the last Parliament, it was her party that proposed a bill to increase premiums by 35%. Furthermore, SMEs have strongly criticized NDP election promises to double pension benefits.

Catherine Swift recently stated that adopting these measures would increase rates by 70% for all SMEs, which would kill them.

I would like to ask my colleague to explain why she is constantly changing her mind about these two issues.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. The government has abandoned people who are unemployed. At present, 58% of unemployed workers who have paid employment insurance premiums receive no benefits from this government. It is unacceptable that those who paid into the fund do not receive benefits.

We are the ones who want to invest in pension plans for these very employees so that, when they retire, they will have an income allowing them to live decently and will not fall under the poverty line. That is very important for us. We are proud to present this to the House, and we will continue to support it.

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, prior to coming to the House of Commons, I served for a number of years inside the Manitoba legislature. It was just a year ago, in fact, that an NDP government budget gave significant corporate tax breaks.

I wonder if the member could explain to me or reconcile an apparent inconsistency, that the only New Democratic party in government is giving corporate tax breaks while, in the opposition, the NDP is opposing corporate tax breaks.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his re-election.

I will just correct the record. There is, of course, a New Democratic government elected in Nova Scotia, as well, which we are very proud of.

We have proposed small business tax cuts because we know that small businesses across the country are job creators, and that is something we are very proud of.

We have also proposed a tax credits for small, medium and large businesses that actually create jobs. However, I will insist that our party, under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, has been absolutely consistent that across the board, no strings attached tax cuts have not created jobs, and I challenge the government, or the hon. member, to prove otherwise.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to speak on behalf of the constituents of Newton—North Delta, who tell me each and every day that health care facilities are just not available. They are talking about doctors and nurses, as well as hospitals that are overcrowded.

Right now, there are thousands of doctors in my riding who are credentialed to be doctors in other countries, but in my riding they are driving taxis. That is a very honourable job. However, we are in need of doctors. I see there is recognition in the budget that we have to do something about credentials, but there is no money attached to that.

My question is, what are we going to do to address this dire shortage of doctors and nurses for all citizens in Canada?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question and I congratulate the hon. member on her election to the House.

The Budget

In my riding of Parkdale—High Park there is a similar situation. Far too many people are driving taxis when they ought to be practising medicine or some other field for which they are qualified but cannot practise in Canada. My party would dedicate funds toward its commitment to work with the provinces and make sure that foreign credentialed professionals here in Canada get the recognition they need in order to practise.

However, more than that, unlike the Conservative government that moves doctors from south to north and from urban to rural areas and does not train one new doctor or health care professional, my party would invest in training 6,000 new doctors, many more nurses and other health care professionals, because it is unacceptable in a country as rich as Canada that there are Canadians who cannot find family doctors while there are doctors from other countries driving taxis. We in the NDP will fix that.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the NDP's finance critic whether, before making their decision, she or the members of her party had the opportunity to speak with Quebec's finance minister, Raymond Bachand, about what is in this budget and what was unfortunately not in the March budget, and that is the \$2.2 billion for sales tax harmonization. Many of the members from Quebec are now NDP. I am wondering whether their caucus or the member herself spoke with these people before making a decision about the final vote. I am also wondering what the NDP is going to do. In Quebec, we are very satisfied that the government has finally listened to the arguments of the Bloc Québécois and granted \$2.2 billion for sales tax harmonization in Quebec. This is very important to Quebec.

• (1205)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

The \$2.2 billion in compensation for sales tax harmonization was proposed by the NDP. We are very happy that the government took our suggestion and modified the budget to include this proposal. It is very important to Quebecers, and it is the NDP members from Quebec who made this suggestion. We are pleased that the government listened to us.

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Madam Speaker, please note that I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

As this is my first time rising in the House since the election, let me start with some thanks. First, I would like to thank my constituents of Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont for giving me the honour of serving them once again.

I thank my wife Debi and my kids, Jaden and Jenae. I love them and their understanding of the importance of this job that keeps me away from them and away from home 130 nights a year. When we started six years ago, we said this would be our family adventure, and it has been a wonderful one, not always easy, but wonderful, nonetheless.

The Budget

To my staff in Edmonton and Ottawa, my re-election is really a vote of approval for the service that we perform together for our constituents. I would like to thank them for their hard work in that regard.

Finally, I thank my volunteers. Of course, I cannot name them all, but I know I would not be here without them. They are like an extended family to us and we are truly blessed by their incredible efforts and support. In particular, I would like to publicly acknowledge my campaign co-managers, Bill Witzke and Leigh Johnston, who literally put in countless hours and ran a fantastic campaign.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, I welcome the opportunity to outline the government's agenda to support Canadian business, foster innovation and promote competitiveness.

Budget 2011 continues to focus on the task at hand, shepherding our country through the global economic recovery, while at the same time continuing to lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable economic growth.

In the context of the current global economic rebalancing, Canada has stood out among nations as a pillar of economic strength. To date, we have successfully navigated through global economic turbulence, thanks to timely, temporary and targeted interventions.

In response to the global recession, Canada's economic action plan provided \$60 billion in extraordinary stimulus to support jobs and growth. The results speak for themselves: first, seven straight quarters of economic growth. For those of us on this side of the House the most important statistic is this: Canada has created nearly 540,000 net new jobs since July 2009. That speaks to the strength of our economy, the ingenuity of Canada's small and medium size enterprise sector, and the strong economic record of our government.

In the last election, our party said that we would focus on the economy, as we have done in the past and as we will continue to do in the future. That is what Canadians expect of us and that is what this budget delivers. In particular, the budget takes key steps to help businesses, including the thousands of small businesses across the country that are so fundamental to Canada's economy. For example, we are providing \$20 million over two years to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs become the leaders of tomorrow.

To make it easier for all entrepreneurs to determine the government licences and permits they need, we have also announced measures to upgrade the BizPaL service and expand online capabilities. As we make it easier for Canadians to start new businesses and to build those businesses, we will continue to see new jobs and growth in the Canadian economy.

I would now like to focus on two additional priority areas where we can support jobs and growth, the digital economy strategy and research and development.

Supporting jobs and growth means giving workers and businesses the tools they need to succeed in a competitive global economy, tools which include digital technologies. These technologies power activities in all areas of the economy, from manufacturing and transportation to advanced telecommunications and web-based

services. They also provide a platform for all sectors to become more innovative and productive.

This is about setting the stage for the economy of tomorrow, and our plan announces a suite of initiatives that will contribute to this strategy.

Our government is doing its part by announcing measures that will ensure that Canada provides world class infrastructure and a competitive framework to encourage the private sector to create and adopt new information and communications technologies.

Additional initiatives will help Canada develop the digital workforce of tomorrow and create Canada's next generation of digital content by providing \$80 million in new funding over three years through the industrial research assistance program to help small and medium size businesses accelerate their adoption of key information and communications technologies through collaborative projects with colleges; \$60 million over the next three years to promote increased student enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy; and \$100 million per year to the Canada media fund for investments in the creation of digital content across multiple platforms.

• (1210)

Our government has also committed to reintroduce and seek passage of copyright legislation that balances the needs of creators and users. The copyright modernization act would bring Canada in line with advances in technology and international standards, as well as provide a framework that is forward-looking, flexible and technologically neutral.

Overall, these measures will help ensure that by 2020 Canada's economy is leading edge, driven by innovation, boosting productivity and sustaining high levels of prosperity.

I am proud that our government is taking the steps necessary to foster long-term growth in the economy and providing young Canadians with as many opportunities to succeed as possible.

Beyond the digital economy, the global economy depends increasingly on knowledge and innovation. In order to be a global leader, Canada must attract and develop talented people, increase our capacity for world-leading research and development and promote education and skills development. Our government measures will help strengthen Canada's leadership position by supporting international research collaboration and world-class research centres in Canada.

Specifically, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan announces new resources to support leading edge research, to improve commercialization and support the adoption of new technologies in the marketplace, including: investing an additional \$37 million per year to support the three federal granting research councils and providing an additional \$10 million per year for the indirect costs program to support costs such as those related to operating and maintaining research facilities; investing \$53.5 million over five years to support the creation of 10 new Canada excellence research chairs; investing \$4 million over three years to support the construction of a cyclotron for the production of medical isotopes at the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute; and providing \$50 million over five years beginning in 2012-13 to the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics to support its leading research, education and public outreach activities.

Research and innovation drive jobs and create opportunities for Canadian companies to succeed all around the world. Our government knows that Canadian students, businesses and workers have the skills to succeed. We know we can compete with anyone in the world. With this budget, Canadians know they have a government that believes in them.

Our plan is supported. Here are just two examples of what Canadians had to say about these measures. Seneca College president, David Agnew, says:

This budget speaks to the role that colleges play in increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. This on-going investment also illustrates the important role that our students and graduates play in today's economic prosperity.

The president of a Toronto company, Darcor Casters & Wheels, Rob Hilborn, says:

These budget measures supporting the link between businesses and polytechnics will increase innovation and entrepreneurship for many Canadian companies. Budget 2011 opens more doors for small and mid-sized firms to access college research facilities and talent.

In conclusion, budget 2011 will position us on a path to a stronger economic recovery. As we move ahead, we will keep taxes low, and I will create jobs, we will promote investment and growth, we will encourage innovation and we will deliver on initiatives that improve Canada's business environment.

I am proud to support this plan and I hope all members will join me in passing this budget expeditiously.

• (1215)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague and I do not disagree that there is some good stuff in this budget. I know we advocated for a lot of the items that were put in this budget.

However, when we look at the regional economic development, we see that there will be a decrease in funding for regional economic development. How does that help bolster our communities that have been hit hard by the loss of jobs in the forestry sector?

We have FedNor. We see \$4 million over three years to Industry Canada's federal economic development initiative in northern Ontario to buy a cyclotron for the production of medical isotopes at the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

The Budget

We appreciate some of the money in here but we are seeing a decrease in funding. Maybe the member could explain to me why there would be a decrease in funding when it comes to regional economic development.

Mr. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the premise of the question is completely incorrect.

However, let us deal with the big picture of the facts. It is well-known around the world that the Canadian economy is strong relative to other industrialized countries. Of course, organizations, like the International Monetary Fund, the World Economic Forum and the OECD, have praised the Canadian economy and the Government of Canada for the measures that we have taken during the economic downturn. Those measures have led to a strength in the economy that has seen, as I mentioned in my speech, 540,000 net new jobs being created in the economy since July 2009, which is a considerable positive impact. That has a positive impact on all regions across the country. All regions and all Canadians benefit from that increase in jobs due to the steps that the government has taken.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for coming back to the House and on his fine speech starting out with his family. I wish him and his family all the best.

I will start with the copyright legislation that will be, as the member pointed out, reintroduced. If memory serves me correctly, I believe he was on the special legislative committee that was struck in the last House. If not, my apologies. However, I do want to ask about that because a great deal of input came into the committee about the legislation at that time, which I believe was Bill C-32. A lot of that input was about the balance between the creators and the users.

Specifically, what will be absorbed from that input that will be brought into the reintroduced version of the copyright legislation?

If the member has time, my second question concerns the influence of foreign ownership over telecom. I am wondering what the member's thoughts are about protecting the cultural industries, like broadcasting, from foreign ownership for the sake of Canadian culture.

Mr. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I, too, congratulate the hon. member for his re-election.

In regard to the question about the copyright legislation, I was on that special legislative committee. We heard much input and, as a government, we heard much input prior to the committee hearings, before the legislation was drafted, as we did cross country consultations on that legislation.

What we found in the committee was that the testimony reflected the fact that we did have a balanced bill. There obviously were people with several points of view. Copyright legislation is very complex. It is not one of those pieces of legislation where there are two sides. There are 15 or 16 different sides to the legislation.

However, I found that, as we listened to the testimony, it was reflective of the fact that we had done a pretty job balancing all of the different expectations as we went through that process.

The Budget

One of the things we did find through that committee process was that it would have been nice to have moved a little quicker. As we went through the process at the committee, we could have held more hearings and made sure we had listened to more people in a manner that was faster than what we were doing. Of course, the opposition parties had the majority of members on the committee which made it kind of difficult.

I do look forward to getting back into the committee room on the new legislation and hearing from stakeholders. Hopefully, we will get more co-operation from all members of the committee in terms of getting the legislation passed, which, according to all members of the committee, is long overdue.

• (1220)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time rising in the House following the election, I will take a moment to thank the people of Oak Ridges—Markham for returning me here. As I said during the campaign, there is not a day that goes by that I am not honoured to serve them in the House and not a day that goes by that I do not thank them for giving me this opportunity to serve our community.

I also want to thank the members of my campaign team for all of the hard work they did to help me get re-elected. I thank my campaign manager, Mathew Ellis, who came back to help me win my second election, and the over 200 volunteers who each and every day knocked on doors and set up signs, not just during the election but in the lead up to the election.

I must say that when I was first elected to this place two and a half years ago, I won by a small plurality of 542 votes. This last time I increased that a bit with a margin of 22,000 votes. While I would like to think that it was my own hard work, I know that it was due to a lot of hard work by the team that surrounds me in both my constituency office and in my Parliament Hill office.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank my constituency team led by Natalie James, Rena Sassano and Owen Macri and, on the Hill, Alli Filleul and my volunteer student Michael Seccareccia. They have done a tremendous amount of work to help me reach the people in my community. My riding is the largest riding in Canada in terms of population. It is twice the size of a normal riding. They have worked very hard to help me secure my re-election.

Of course it goes without saying that I thank my family, my beautiful wife Melanie and my beautiful daughters Natalie and Olivia for their understanding and the sacrifices they make to allow me to be here. They are my best supporters and some of my best advisors. I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank them because without them I would not be able to be here in Ottawa living out my dream each and every day.

When I first came here in 2008, the world was changing. We were in the midst of what is now being called the great recession. It was, of course, a recession that did not start here in Canada but, with a global economy, we felt the effects quickly.

Before I was elected, the government, the Prime Minister and the award-winning Minister of Finance made some changes. They knew something was coming and, as the world economy was heading

toward choppy waters, they decided that the best way to keep our economy going was to reinvest in Canadians. They did that by paying down almost \$40 billion worth of debt. They did that by reducing taxes for families and for businesses. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% so that Canadians and businesses would have more money in their pockets to invest in themselves, their families and their communities.

We invested in families. As I said, I have two small children, a five-year-old and a three-year-old and, thanks to some changes that we introduced, my family receives \$100 per child, as do all Canadians with children under six. It has been a big help to Canadians in meeting the everyday needs of their families.

We also invested in infrastructure. In phase one of Canada's economic action plan, we did what Canadians asked us to do. We sat down with our counterparts at the municipal and provincial levels. Canadians were telling us that they wanted us to work together to get us through the economic downturn and that is what we did. The results in communities like mine and the York region were some \$300 million worth of investments in roads, bridges, public transportation and community centres.

We invested in areas that would help us create jobs and also improve infrastructure so that as we emerged from the global economic downturn our small businesses, our communities and our job creators, small, medium and large, could seize on the benefits of the first phase of the economic action plan. The results have been spectacular. We have seen some 540,000 jobs created, as was mentioned by the parliamentary secretary.

In my community, the results are evident across the riding, and it is because of the hard work of this government. It is also because of the hard work of Canadian taxpayers and the fact that we were able to work with our counterparts at the municipal and provincial levels to get the job done for Canadians.

• (1225)

The minister reintroduced his budget, which is the second phase of Canada's economic action plan. I am just as excited about the next phase as I was about the first phase of the economic action plan because the minister has made out a path to a balance budget. Not only that, we will be doing this a year ahead of time.

As I was out on the campaign trail, Canadians told me that they wanted to see the government back into a balanced budget. They understood the investments that we needed to make in the economy during a recession. They approved of it, but they wanted to see us move toward a balanced budget, and we will do that.

As I said earlier, we will continue to invest in job creation for our small, medium and large job creators. In the last Parliament we introduced the Red Tape Reduction Commission. It is criss-crossing the country, working with small businesses to find out where government is getting in the way and impeding them so we can reduce the red tape and regulation to allow them to meet their potential.

As well, we are introducing a small business hiring tax credit so small businesses in main streets such as in Stouffville, where I live, can hire students, hire individuals and unleash their potential to create jobs.

We are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers.

I represent a portion of Markham that is known as one of the high tech capitals of Canada, but the manufacturing industry in Markham was hard hit by the recession and the lead up to the recession. Some of the changes we made to reduce taxation will allow them to invest in new machinery to upgrade facilities and compete, not based on a low dollar but based on productivity. This allows manufacturers to create jobs, expand and compete. They are not only competing with other Canadians; they are competing around the world.

In Markham they are succeeding and it is because of the hard work of this award-winning Minister of Finance and this entire government. We understand that we need to unleash the potential of our economy and our communities.

We are doing more and are again focusing on families.

In this budget we introduced some increases to the GIS for our seniors. On this side of the House, we understand it was our seniors who helped make this the best country in the world in which to live, invest and raise a family. We are going to support our seniors.

We are introducing a children's art tax credit to make it a little easier for families that want their children to participate in their communities.

We are introducing a family caregiver tax credit. As the population ages, we know it will sometimes fall upon the rest of the family to take care of the parents or grandparents. We want to support them as they do that.

We are also introducing the volunteer firefighter tax credit.

I represent four communities: Markham, Stouffville, King City and Richmond Hill. In two of those communities, King City and Stouffville, it is volunteer fire fighters who put their lives on the line each and every day in responding to hundreds of calls for help. I know our communities would not be as successful as they are if it were not for the hard work of these brave community volunteers.

I had an opportunity to meet with some volunteer firefighters before and during the election. They were very excited that a government had finally recognized the hard work and sacrifices they made. I am very pleased this budget will continue those investments.

As I said earlier, I am extraordinarily proud to have the opportunity to represent my community in the House. Over the last two years in government we have helped guide the country through the worst global recession in history. We have done that while providing more money to Canadians. We have done that by providing support for small, medium and large job creators. We are unleashing the potential of our communities across the country so they can compete not only locally but globally with anybody, any time.

I am so excited about the future of our country because of everything that this government has done to help unleash Canada's potential. We should all be proud of what we have done and thank Canadians for the hard work they have done to allow us this success.

The Budget

I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on being elected Deputy Speaker and I congratulate all the members for being elected as well.

• (1230)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on taking on the position of Deputy Speaker. I know you will keep us all in line and ensure proper decorum in the House of Commons.

I congratulate the member on being in the House again.

I was very interested in his comments about seniors. We have had a massive series of corporate tax cuts. About \$60 billion has been shovelled off the back of a truck by the Conservative government, but many Conservative members seem to have indicated that they are proud of what would be a \$600 increase for an entire year for seniors living alone and \$840 for seniors living as a couple. Could the member to confirm that for Canadians?

If we did a calculation, it is about \$1.15 a day more for seniors living as a couple. We know the HST that the Conservatives have imposed on British Columbia basically adds about \$2 a day on to the costs of those seniors. Could the member confirm to me that what the Conservatives are offering in the budget is \$1.15 a day for seniors living as a couple at a cost with the HST—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. I must give the hon. parliamentary secretary time to respond.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, here is the difference between this side of the House and that side of the House. We are offering Canadians hope. We are offering them a better path than the opposition could ever offer them.

We have invested in seniors. We are increasing the GIS. It is not just about that. We have the new horizons for seniors program, which has been an effective program across my riding. I look at the Markham seniors. I look at the Sanatan Mandir Cultural Centre in my riding, which received a \$25,000 grant so it could educate seniors on how to use the Internet and computers so they could take care of their own banking and become more educated on the new technology. I look across my riding at investments we are making in recreational facilities that seniors use.

Seniors have come to me over the last two and a half years and have said that it is not just about support payments. They enjoy the tax cuts. They approve of the tax cuts for their families that we have made. We listened to seniors with respect to the increase in the GIS. We have done that in co-operation with all sides of the House.

I hope the opposition will join with us in looking forward and work with us in helping to truly unleash the potential of the country. I hope it will look at all the positive things we have accomplished over the last two and a half years and work with us to improve not only the lives of seniors but the lives of all Canadians even more than we have done over the last six years that we have been in office.

The Budget

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Congratulations, Madam Speaker, on your appointment. Congratulations to every member of this Parliament who was elected. My thanks to my campaign team and to the people of Northumberland—Quinte West for sending me here for the third time.

My hon. friend talked about his riding being one of the largest. I am familiar with the Markham area and I know many of the industries.

Would he like to comment upon some of the comments that were made by other representatives of Canadian industries, such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association, the chemical industry in Canada, the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, and I could go on, including the Canadian Homebuilders' Association and how he interprets them and his vision of our economy?

• (1235)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my friend, who does an extraordinary job in representing his communities, somebody who was a mentor to me when I was first elected.

Small, medium and large job creators across the country understand they have a government that is prepared to invest in helping them create jobs. It is prepared to invest to ensure that the economy meets the needs of Canadians. It is helping to ensure that our businesses, no matter how big or how small they are, can compete not only locally but globally.

One of the things we learned during the global recession is that Canadian businesses not only can compete, but they can compete and win when a government gets out of the way when possible, when a government supports them, when a government reduces their taxes, when a government allows them to invest in themselves and in their businesses. When we do that, we succeed.

The heads of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and all the business organizations, including the president of Seneca College, understand that this government will always put the needs of the communities first.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your posting. I know you will serve with honour and distinction in the chamber and hopefully there will be some changes.

First, I want to offer condolences to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. He continues to work at this time and his commitment to people across Canada is very impressive.

I want to thank the constituents of Windsor West for returning me to the House. I was first elected in 1997 and 2000 as a city councillor and federally in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011. Having a break from elections is a good thing for me and my family. I want to thank my spouse Terry, as well as my daughter Alexandria and son Wade for allowing me to do this. They have paid an incredible price and I am truly grateful for all of the small things we are able to treasure because of this opportunity.

I also want to thank my staff. It is very important to recognize Joanne, who filled in for Melanie, as well as Karen Kieran Darlene and Ian, who have been tremendous supporters of mine for many

years and have done great work for the residents of Windsor West. They often put in far too many hours because they love their jobs and I love working with them. It is very special to have them as a support system.

Last, I want to thank all the volunteers, the other candidates who ran in the election and all those who participated in the open democracy. We have a declining vote ratio and it is critically important to get younger people to vote and recognize that our democracy has to change to re-engage people.

When we look at what is happening on the world stage now, people are using cellphones and other types of devices to text and email and are demonstrating on the streets for the right to vote.

It is important to support veterans by recognizing that they have made the ultimate sacrifice in the past, and will in the future, by giving us the opportunity to have a franchise. Despite the misgivings of our democracy, it still is the best in the world and I look forward to improving it.

I want to move now to the budget. The NDP has moved an amendment to the budget related principally to the fact that many Canadians are still falling behind. I find it very interesting that the government often refers to the fact that, measured against the world, Canada is doing much better. It is bragging in a sense about that. However, the reality is that, despite what is happening in Canada, too many people are falling behind and it is no way to measure ourselves.

When we look at the situation in the United States, it is also in a spiral. Just because we are doing modestly better than the U.S. does not mean the decisions we are making are right, principally the continued gutting of the public purse and the increasing expenditures on issues that Canadians do not support.

It is clear the government has delivered a budget that is very similar to the last one, which was not voted on because the government was brought down, for the first time in history, on a non-confidence matter as it did not provide the proper economic information to the chamber related to planes and prisons. It was not due to the budget. It was due to the fact that the House had lost confidence in the government. That is why we had an election, in which New Democrats made history.

It is important to recognize that the vast majority of Canadians do not support the direction in which the government is moving. We are hopeful there will be some amendments and improvements to the budget. What I have heard on the streets of Windsor West and across the country is that planes and prisons are not priorities for Canadians. In fact, people are interested in pensions and pharmaceutical issues related to health care costs.

I had a recent conversation with a veteran at the Windsor Veterans Memorial Services this past Sunday.

I forgot to mention when I started my speech that I will be splitting my time with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. I apologize for that, but I was anxious to thank the people of Windsor West when I began. However, I am very honoured to share my time with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

It is important to think about the people who are having a hard time getting by. The government's priority is large corporate tax cut reductions. People are not getting the same type of treatment.

• (1240)

Yes, we do see a modest improvement to the GIS of a few hundred million dollars, which is \$1.15 a day, as has been pointed out by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, when it is broken down. That will enable seniors to get a cup of coffee a day more. So, perhaps that will lead to a boon at Tim Hortons for a caffeine fix in the morning, but it is certainly not going to take away from the problems that they are facing with regard to paying rent, having a pension that is going to be sustainable and also participating in society. I heard that at the veterans memorial services.

If we look at where the government's priorities are, and I asked this of the Liberal leader, they are under the ideology of large corporate tax cut reductions which supposedly lead to economic development and growth. When we start to look at the real numbers and the real situation we find that this ideology is flawed and is not working.

In fact, when we look at the number of different issues around this since we have had large corporate tax cut reductions, research and development has fallen to 3% in 2008. It is actually the lowest amount since the 1990s. We see deepening trade deficits. Canada's trade deficits, which were in a surplus a number of years ago, are now in a deficit because we have been using the wrong economic policies. Also, we have more foreign control over Canadian companies. We have witnessed a series of takeovers where there were supposed to be undertakings that were going to protect Canadian jobs that never took place or are actually in the courts, one being U.S. Steel right now, where Canadian jobs were usurped.

In fact, we saw those companies actually relocate some of those jobs overseas. They did a vertical integration in the industry where they bought Canadian natural resources and basically either flatlined them or reduced them so that their commodities abroad would actually rise in price. We have seen that with a number of Canadian companies in the mining industry and the steel industry. We have seen other takeovers, like Nortel, where we have lost our place in the world. Where we used to be the cutting edge, we have now basically flatlined in this regard and the government has done nothing to protect those jobs.

There is an issue with regard to productivity. Productivity is stalled in Canada. We have seen that not being the workers' fault but the fact that we have actually had lower investment in research and development and modernization of our plants. Because of the government's policy on the border between Canada and the U.S. where basically 40% of Canada's trade comes through my riding every single day, it has allowed the militarization and the thickening of the border without challenging the U.S. about these issues. It has signed a series of agreements and protocols in the hope that it would get some relief with regard to trade and tourism, but that has not happened. In fact, the exact opposite has happened. Some of those deals that the government has signed have created more problems right now in reduced services and increased problems. It has affected our ability and capability to compete.

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In fact when we look at where this has been going, it has also driven the dollar up. The large corporate tax cuts and a petrodollar based upon export of raw resources has driven our dollar up approximately 20%, in terms of overvaluation. So manufacturers in the hotbed of Quebec or Ontario, and even other parts of Canada, are now competing at a disadvantage because we have artificially inflated the dollar and we watched the U.S. devalue its dollar. That makes it difficult when manufacturers with branch plants here are looking at expansion, renewal, a whole series of things, they are also looking at the border and saying that maybe they will invest in the United States, especially given the massive incentives they have had.

Interestingly, the U.S. has done it differently. Instead of large corporate tax cut reductions which is basically the ideology here, in terms of the Conservatives and the Liberals prior to that, the U.S. has done it through targeted initiatives. It has been stealing back its jobs and so forth, and we have done nothing about that. We witnessed this strategy with the softwood lumber industry, in particular, but it is also happening in the manufacturing sector.

Where has the money gone? The money has gone to a series of tax cuts. The tax cuts and subsidies for the oil and gas industry have resulted in the fact that they pay around 10.6% in federal tax. Meanwhile, every other corporation out there playing with value added is actually paying 16.5%.

The result is that the value-added manufacturing sector has been subsidizing the oil and gas industry at a time when people are getting ripped off at the pumps, being gouged by unfair practices that have cost people in their pocketbooks. This has to stop. This is why the budget fails and New Democrats are not going to stand for it.

• (1245)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the comments regarding the valuation of our Canadian dollar as it is now at parity or slightly above, not just for manufacturing but certainly for raw resources, such as the fishery on the east coast and the forestry. As we get an appreciation in price of a particular species it seems that many factors negate that value coming back to the fishermen and certainly one of those is the value of the Canadian dollar.

A headline I read this morning said that finding \$4 billion to cut from the federal government's \$80 billion in program expenses is "no big deal", our finance minister said Tuesday.

Of course it is not a big deal because it has not been done yet. I suspect it is going to be a much bigger deal as time goes by and the cuts need to be made.

I would like to specifically ask the member, in light of the large deficit that we have and in order to get to that balanced budget figure by 2014, how he would propose the government do that?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I thank my cousin from Windsor for the question.

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It is really important that when the member looks at this question he knows that it is a big deal. We know that the cuts are going to come on things that are being targeted for ideology at the expense of Canadians. It could be health care, the social services or a series of things.

It is important for Canadians to understand the choices they did not make. The oil and gas industry right now, and the last figures available are from 2008, is getting around \$2 billion worth of subsidies. The industry is getting it from a number of different tax breaks. There is the flow through shares tax break, the Canadian explorer expenses tax break, the Canadian development expense tax break, the Canadian oil and gas property expense tax break, the Canadian capital cost reduction allowance tax break. It goes on and on.

These are specific targeted subsidies. We are actually borrowing money and paying interest on it, because we are in a deficit right now. We are borrowing money from all Canadians, our kids and our future and we are going to pay interest on that until we finally get to a surplus position. It is to provide a tax cut for the oil and gas industry, when people going to the pumps are getting ripped off every single day. That is what needs to change.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Madam Speaker, does the member for Windsor West, who voted against the last economic action plan and who sounds like he is not happy with this one either, recognize the improvement in employment in the member's own riding?

The member's area used to be have the worst unemployment rate in Canada. It does no longer. Indeed there is still work to do.

Will the member acknowledge that Canada's economic action plan has worked? Would he stop with the rhetoric and admit that it has worked, that it has worked in the member's own riding, and that the member is very happy about some of the announcements in his riding that he voted against?

Can we get an assurance from the member that he recognizes the good work of Canada's economic action plan and that this time he will vote for his riding constituents and not the leader of his party?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the reality is there are still far too many people unemployed in my riding. Some of the actual success in my riding is from its own hard work, not necessarily from the government and its policies.

What is really important is that since the Conservative government has been in power, part-time employment has increased 50% in Canada. Yes, there actually are more jobs because people are working several of them just to get by and they are barely doing that.

With regard to the government's programs, it is interesting. We have had federal programs, stimulus programs, and the member would know this as would the member for Essex, where there are announcements for projects in Windsor and what actually happens is the contract is outsourced and people come from other places, like Orangeville where there is a 3% unemployment rate. The workers drive down with their trucks, do the work, sleep in their cabs and then go back home at the end of the day.

That did not help the Windsor area. What we need is specific strategies. When it comes to the border, yes, I have been pushing for work on the border since 2002 when people called it a pipe dream and it is now coming to fruition. The government has done some good work on the border, there is no doubt about that.

We need a local workers' mandate because we are going to witness foreign workers and other types of workers that will not specifically address some of the shortages we have in Windsor. We need to plan this opportunity.

The government refuses to do that and it needs to change because we are going to be spending billions of dollars. Let us make sure it is done right so that we get the value-added employment that is necessary.

• (1250)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to the budget that has been presented in the House.

I would like to start by thanking the voters of Burnaby—New Westminster, who honoured me by re-electing me for the fourth time to the House of Commons in the election held on May 2. I would also like to thank my family: my partner Limei, my son Stefan, my parents Ruth and Terry Julian, my sister Randi and her family, my brother Patrick and his family. They were all, and continue to be, extremely supportive of the work that I do in the House and my long absences from home in British Columbia.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my staff in Ottawa, Henri Sader, Mounia Lahbabi, and in my Burnaby office, Sandra Bell, Katrina Chen and Marja Kauppi, all of whom provide excellent services to the constituents of Burnaby—New Westminster. It is because of their work that I am able to do the work in this vastly enlarged NDP caucus that will be playing such a key role in the years to come.

I would like to address the budget and follow up on the comments of my colleague from Windsor West about how the Conservative government has approached what is basically a retread budget.

I do not think it is a secret to any of the Canadians who live across this country who are on the main streets out in the real world in this country that for them, Tory times have been very tough times. If we look at the last five years and look at the erosion of employment in many of our key sectors, we can see just how difficult it has become for Canadians under the mandate of the Conservative government.

No one votes Conservative because they expect a better health care system. Conservatives have not been renowned for building an effective public health care system, for providing access to public education, for providing the kinds of services that Canadians need. Nobody votes Conservative for those reasons, but we would expect the one thing Conservatives would be able to get right would be the economy.

However, we see here that what the budget does is simply enhance the previous measures the Conservatives have taken that have led to what is very clearly an economic decline for ordinary Canadian families, for the middle-class and poor Canadians.

As the member for Toronto—Danforth, our leader, said earlier today, it does not mean that there is not anything good in the budget. Corporate CEOs and corporate lobbyists will find this budget very much to their liking, but the reality is on Main Street in this country there is very little that ordinary Canadians will have to be joyful about.

We have seen, and other NDP speakers have raised this issue, \$60 billion doled out in massive corporate tax cuts. These are not targeted tax cuts. These are not tax cuts that are linked to job creation. These are not tax cuts that are actually linked to building viable community economies. This is just money that is shovelled out the back of a truck. After five years of seeing these progressive policies of massive corporate tax cuts, we have to wonder just where Canada has ended up.

The Minister of Finance likes to point to the slight increase in the overall job creation, but the reality is over the last five years, given the growth in labour force, which is 1.5% a year, that the Conservatives have the responsibility of creating 300,000 additional jobs every year. How have they fared? StatsCan gives us the results. The results are that there is a million jobs deficit. Over the last five years since the Conservatives have been in power and where they needed to create about 300,000 new jobs or new people coming into the labour force every year, they needed to create 1.5 million. They have actually created about half a million jobs overall and these jobs have largely been part-time or temporary in nature, certainly not the permanent, family-sustaining jobs that Canadians are calling for from coast to coast to coast.

If we dig even deeper and look at the statistics around where these jobs have been created, they tend to be in the low end, in the temporary, part-time and in the service sector, but what has actually happened with the type of manufacturing and value-added jobs that are the basis, the foundation of the community economy across the country? When we put those figures out, they show a narrative of why it is becoming increasingly difficult for Canadian families.

• (I255)

In manufacturing we have seen, on the Conservative watch, something that started under the Liberals, which is why they are in the penalty box. However, it is has continued under the Conservatives. We have lost 250,000 manufacturing jobs since they came to power.

We have lost jobs in the agricultural sector. As you know, Madam Speaker, being from British Columbia, we have lost tens of thousands of jobs in the softwood lumber sector. That has not been in just British Columbia: it has been right across the prairies, it has been in northern Ontario, it has been in Quebec. It is due to a foolish strategy that was put into place by the Conservative government.

Overall, in manufacturing we have seen a significant decrease in good family-sustaining jobs that have been available in our economy. What we have seen is a growth of part-time, temporary, low-wage jobs in this country. That is the Conservative legacy. The reality is that just to maintain the labour force, they are a million jobs short from when they came to power.

The Conservatives will point to the unemployment rate and say that the unemployment rate is not that bad. We have heard some

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Conservatives say that, but the reality is that the only reason the unemployment rate has not gone through the roof is that there are progressively an ever-increasing number of Canadians who have simply opted out. They are not in the labour force. They are not counted as part of the labour force participation rate. That is a singular growth we have seen under the Conservative government: the number of Canadians who simply cannot find work.

Coming from a riding that has been economically challenged by Conservative policies, I can tell members that we have seen the fallout from the softwood lumber sellout that led to the closure of three mills and the direct loss of 2,000 jobs in my riding and my area.

We also see how the other economic policies of the Conservative government have impacted Burnaby—New Westminster. There has not been any overall comprehensive strategy to bring new Canadians, who often come with a wide variety of skills and abilities. There has been no real movement on credential recognition, aside from some ribbon-cutting. As a result, in a lot of cases we are seeing that labour force participation has meant that new Canadians are simply realizing they are not going to be able to provide their skills, their abilities, their experience and their education to Canada.

When we look at the Conservative legacy after five years, what we see is a loss of good jobs, continued sellout and stimulation of exports of raw materials. The Conservatives are renowned for exporting raw bitumen, raw logs and raw minerals, and the manufacturing sector has suffered. Value-added manufacturing has suffered.

What is the net result?

We know the debt load of the average Canadian family has climbed over the past decade. It has doubled, which means that Canadian families are facing the erosion of real income. It is not the corporate lobbyists or corporate CEOs, but the middle class, the ordinary Canadian families. It is the middle class and poor Canadians who are contributing and are the bedrock and foundation of our country. The erosion of that income has led to record levels of debt.

What does this budget do to address their issues, aside from \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts? Not much.

For the average senior and hundreds of thousands of seniors living in poverty, we have seen that if they are a couple, they get \$1.15 more from the Conservative government. It is shameful. It is disgraceful, especially when the HST imposed on B.C. charges \$2 a day for those same seniors.

For students facing record debt levels, particularly in British Columbia, there is nothing in this budget that addresses their problems.

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● (1300)

[Translation]

The reality is that 4.5 million Canadians voted for the NDP because they wanted to do away with those old policies that only lobbyists benefit from. That is why there are so many of us here now. The 103 NDP members are listening to Canadians, and we will pressure this government to change its policies, which are not good for ordinary families, for middle-class Canadian families or for the poorest Canadians. That is our mission and what we will continue to focus on in the years to come.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House once again and to do so as the re-elected representative for Kitchener Centre. I want to thank the electorate there for returning me to the House.

I also want to compliment my colleague across the way on his re-election. It is always interesting to listen to his speeches because of the ideas he presents, and also because I often find myself very entertained by the weird and fantastical stories that I hear from him.

In particular, I was struck by his comments that under the Conservative government we are going to low-paying and part-time jobs. I notice that Statistics Canada and the Department of Finance have said that between July 2009 and April 2011, 90% of the jobs that we have recovered have been in high-wage industries, and that during that same time 84% of the jobs that we have recovered have been full-time jobs.

I wonder if my colleague would agree with our very competent officials in Statistics Canada and the Department of Finance. If he does not—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I will return the compliment to the hon. member.

Statistics Canada gets the real figures out. The reality is that we can understand in budget documents what the Conservatives will do. I can perfectly understand that this cuts a little slice of what is most favourable to them. However, we have to look not at that single tree, but at the overall forest.

The reality is that after five years of Conservative government, we have seen an erosion in real family income. We have seen more people leaving the labour force and not participating, because those good jobs are simply not available. There has been a catastrophic decline in manufacturing jobs, value-added jobs and family-sustaining jobs.

The Conservatives can take credit for massive and bloated corporate tax cuts that they have strewn around everywhere. They can certainly take credit for that. It is a record. It is even worse than the former Liberal government was in that respect. However, they cannot take credit for real economic initiatives that have led to the kind of prosperity we want to see for every Canadian. For seniors, \$1.15 a day is simply disgraceful.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House again representing the

constituents of Vancouver Quadra. I want to thank the very educated, engaged citizenry of my riding for re-electing me and for their continued support.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster mentioned a wealth of adjectives and types of jobs and industries and labour force issues, all of which are important.

What I did not hear was the word “green”. I heard nothing about the kind of innovation that is so badly needed, innovation that would lead to a greener economy and to jobs in green industries. I did not hear anything about the absence of stimulus funding to alternative energy and other green measures and their importance for our future.

Does it not matter, or was it just an omission by error?

● (1305)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the raising of this issue by the member for Vancouver Quadra. She is absolutely right. In 10 minutes I addressed more of the macroeconomic issues we are facing as a country.

The member is absolutely right to point out that the Conservative government is not undertaking any sort of environmental or green initiatives. Our environment critic, the member for Halifax, will be raising those issues in the coming days, as will our entire caucus.

Many members of our caucus are environmental activists and are very concerned about the impacts of climate change. The member is right to point out that it is not in the budget. Many Canadians have given up on the Conservatives' ability to even understand the importance of the environmental challenges we face.

There is no doubt that this budget does not in any way reflect that environmental imperative. That too is a shame.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Peace River.

I am very proud to rise here today to speak in favour of the budget presented by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance. I am proud of our government's economic management in a time of a financial crisis, management that allowed us to come out ahead of most major industrialized countries.

Indeed, the International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada will be the first G7 country to return to a balanced budget. Our government has chosen a prudent yet rigorous approach to reduce public spending and eliminate the deficit. We are focusing on low taxes, job creation and sustained growth, in order to maintain the social programs that are so important to Canadians, while creating a solid financial foundation to ensure long-term prosperity.

Public Works and Government Services Canada is determined to make its activities more efficient and effective, and to save Canadians money. In this regard, the department wholeheartedly supported the Government of Canada's priority to return to a balanced budget through a strategic review of all departmental spending. Public Works and Government Services Canada met all the requirements of this very important exercise. Among other things, PWGSC will continue to support the reallocation of resources under the strategic and operating review announced in the budget in order to meet the government's most important priorities.

Canada's economic action plan has been a great success. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, I know that this department has played a major role in the economic action plan through its accelerated infrastructure program.

I am very proud of what PWGSC has achieved in terms of revitalizing the government's important capital assets; these achievements are nothing short of exemplary. I am very pleased that we have been allocated an additional \$148 million over five years to preserve PWGSC's engineering assets.

We are fully committed to ensuring that public infrastructure meets the highest safety standards while creating jobs for local economies.

In the Canada first defence strategy, our government promised Canadians that it would provide our men and women in uniform with the equipment they need to do their difficult and dangerous work. We have already begun to make good on this promise, and we have made excellent progress to date, particularly in the area of shipbuilding. The national shipbuilding procurement strategy is a completely new approach to military procurement. We are optimistic that the lessons learned from this initiative will help us to improve procurement strategies in general.

First and foremost, we decided that our ships would be built in Canada by Canadians. This means that, in addition to building the ships that our navy and Coast Guard need to defend our country, we will also be creating permanent, highly skilled jobs across the country. We will support the marine industry, which is one of the key drivers of the economy and the lifeblood of many communities, and we will do so while fully respecting the department's fundamental values of openness, transparency and fairness.

We consulted extensively with the industry, and listened to what it had to say, before implementing the national shipbuilding procurement strategy. Therefore, we know that long-term planning and stable funding are essential to business growth. That is why we are making this commitment.

● (1310)

We also learned that we must work more closely together within the public service. Therefore, we adopted a teamwork approach for the entire government with respect to defence procurement by placing the emphasis on streamlined monitoring and approval processes.

These significant improvements to the military procurement process can guide our approach to procurement in general. Hence, industry will be able to do business with a Government of Canada

that has reduced red tape and the time it takes to sign a contract and start the work.

Public Works and Government Services Canada is pleased, and rightly so, to have reduced the time required to purchase important military goods by more than half. For example, with respect to replacing our aging fleet of Hercules aircraft, the request for proposal for the 17 aircraft was issued in August 2007 and the \$1.4 billion U.S. contract was awarded in December 2007. This procurement process, which was approved in June 2006, was completed in just 18 months, well within the anticipated time frame of 48 months.

My government believes that our procurement spending can and should be used to maximize our aerospace, shipbuilding and defence sectors' global competitiveness, and we will ensure that that is the case. The same goes for procurement in general. It must be in line with all of our economic objectives, and one of the areas we are actively targeting is innovation.

Innovation is an essential economic driver, and governments are in a position to choose to support entrepreneurs and dreamers who create, innovate and invent.

In last year's budget, we introduced the Canadian innovation commercialization program to help launch Canadian innovations. I am pleased to announce that the first round was a huge success and that we will soon be starting a second round. The Canadian innovation commercialization program helps Canadian businesses market their new technologies, products and services. Our work will help strengthen and diversify our economy.

Public Works and Government Services Canada is looking for government partners to test the innovations and to provide feedback to the businesses to help them successfully market their innovative products. In short, our government is doing more than innovate, since, in purchasing goods and services to support employment and our country's key industries, we are reaching out to businesses that create jobs and we are supporting them as they develop new products and profitable services. This is an entirely new approach to working with the private sector to help us build the prosperous and safe Canada that we want and are working so hard to achieve.

● (1315)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Madam Speaker, it looks like a lot of money will be collected for employment insurance, but many people still do not have access to it. Can the hon. member assure us that not a penny of the EI premiums or any of the money in the EI fund will be used for reducing the debt?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I want thank the hon. member for her question and congratulate her on her election.

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As the hon. member knows, in the past, through Canada's economic action plan, we have invested money directly into the employment insurance fund in lieu of raising premiums. We have done more than the hon. member is suggesting we have, and we will continue in that direction.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, I do not think my question was really answered.

I wanted to know whether the government will ensure that none of the money paid into the fund will be allocated to the debt. We are asking the question because the funds collected should be used as employment insurance and people should have access to this or other programs to help them get back to work.

I will repeat the question. Can the hon. member assure us that, with this budget, no EI premiums will be allocated to the debt?

Mr. Jacques Gaurde: Madam Speaker, as you know, the employment insurance fund is used to give unemployed people in Canada the benefits they need and to provide training programs to help the unemployed return to the workforce. That has always been and will continue to be the government's objective.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on being chosen as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.

I have a question for my colleague, with whom I sat for some time on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I see that in the budget, which has not changed a single bit, there was not a single line added concerning agriculture.

I want to know whether the member and parliamentary secretary can tell us why the government did not think to create a specific program for pork producers, who are currently going through an unprecedented crisis in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. The same goes for the issue of specified risk materials. I think my colleague is familiar with this issue that affects cattle producers. The budget should have renewed the slaughter program.

I would like to know what answer my colleague has for Quebec producers.

Mr. Jacques Gaurde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As we know, pork producers in Canada are going through an unprecedented market crisis. Although the price of pork has increased, the input and grain costs have increased as well. They are still in a negative margin. We understand and are very aware of what is going on with pork producers.

As for beef producers and the issue of specified risk materials, we know that we must be innovative to move these products out of the value chain, so that they can regain a value on the market. This way, producers can benefit from this value and at least bring the risk to zero. In other words, we must turn the problem they were having into a value, and perhaps even turn that into revenue. We are happy to be working towards this on behalf of producers.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I want to congratulate you on your re-election and your appointment as Deputy Speaker.

I want to take the opportunity, and I am hoping I will be given the latitude to do this, to give some thanks. This is my first opportunity to speak in the House since my election. It is my third election in five and a half years and there are a lot of people to thank for the time they put in leading up to, during and subsequent to the election campaign. As we know, there are a lot of things that need to be taken care of even after the election is completed.

First and foremost, I want to thank the folks in my riding who supported and voted for me in unprecedented numbers. I recognize it is an incredible responsibility that I have been given for the third time and I want to thank each and every person who supported me. I recognize that 100% of the constituents did not vote for me, but I am here for 100% of them in my riding and I will do my utmost over the next number of years to represent the interests of my community in the long term.

I want to make brief reference to some of the team members who helped me get elected. First and foremost, I want to thank my campaign manager, Alden Harms, who was dedicated throughout the campaign to getting me elected for the third time. He has been my right-hand man through three elections and did an incredible job, as he always does.

I want to thank Lydell Torgerson, my official agent, a leading accountant in the province of Alberta. He has been recognized by his colleagues and dedicated a significant amount of volunteer time to my campaign. I want to thank him in the House for his ongoing dedication in getting all of the necessary paperwork done in order to fulfill the requirements that Elections Canada has.

I want to thank Dena Short, who works day in and day out to manage the office in my constituency. For that, I owe her a great debt of gratitude. I certainly want to recognize her work, as well as that of Lamont Anderson who was in charge of the sign crew. He worked diligently to get the signs up and down and taken care of.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the dedicated staff in my constituency office, as well as my Hill office, who make me a more popular guy, quite frankly. They are the people who continue to work day in and day out to represent my desire for my constituents, which is that they be well represented. Anybody who comes into my constituency office is always well represented because of the staff. I want to thank Trudy, who has been with me for the last five and a half years, and Kim and Crystal, who have also been with me for the last number of years. Their commitment to my constituents is, without question, their number one priority and I want to thank them.

I also want to thank my family, my mom, dad, siblings and their families for their support. Having five siblings is always positive because more people will vote for one and then when they have spouses as well, that increases the base. They went well beyond what they were called on to do during the election campaign in many capacities and I want to thank them.

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I also want to thank my immediate family, my kids for giving me the luxury of being able to campaign, as well as my wife, who is a remarkable person. She is really the trooper in my family. She is the one who holds everything together during very stressful election campaigns and has given me great latitude in doing my job and serving my constituents. She really is an amazing partner and has dedicated the last five and a half years to working with me to represent the constituents in my riding.

I wanted to extend those thanks before I moved on to the budget.

Today I am talking about the low-tax plan for Canadians that the minister brought forward yesterday. Of course, this was not an entirely unexpected budget. We expected many of the provisions within the budget. Obviously, we had a preview of this budget last March prior to the election campaign and then we fought during the campaign for the opportunity to reinstate the budget and to have it debated in the House and hopefully passed by it. However, we did add a few other things to the budget. We made a number of other commitments in the election campaign and those things are being followed through with.

• (1320)

Our Prime Minister said that we were going to get things done, get back to work, and do a whole host of things in addition to the budget that was put forward before. Those things are included in this budget. I think that is a testament to the commitment of our finance minister and Prime Minister to doing what we said we were going to do during the election campaign. I give them a lot of thanks.

Canadians can be reassured that we are intent on doing what we said. We are seeing the evidence of that in this budget as well as in the Speech from the Throne. My many thanks to the finance minister for including those provisions in the budget. I know my constituents, as well as many of my colleagues' constituents, are depending on those things being carried out.

When I was first elected, my hope was that I would be able to represent my constituents well and build a stronger, more vibrant community. I was a small business owner at that point in time. My wife and I had just recently been married. I had been involved in politics for a number of years. I had been an active member of our association for over 10 years.

I hoped to become an elected member of this House to get a few things done. I was a small business owner and I was increasingly frustrated by the government's response to small business owners. Increasingly, we saw a government, in a previous incarnation, that was hard on small business owners, the engine to our local economies. I was often disappointed with the responses and an increased tax burden that small business owners were expected to bear.

Over the last five and a half years since my election, I have worked to advocate on behalf of small business owners. I believe it is important that we give all of the latitude that is necessary for small business owners to innovate and to create jobs in our local communities.

This budget is an extension of some of the things that we have seen over the last five and a half years in terms of reducing the tax burden for small business owners, for giving more resources to small

business owners, and in paying tribute to small business owners for what they are, the drivers of our national economy.

One of the important measures within this budget, that there has not been a lot of attention drawn to, is the fact that our government has made the commitment to continue along the effort to reduce red tape for small businesses.

I had the opportunity in the last Parliament to sit on the red tape reduction commission. I had to opportunity to travel across this great country. What was remarkable, no matter where I went in this country, were the similarities in the concerns that I heard from people which were incredibly consistent.

We heard of struggles in terms of getting certain things done. Oftentimes it related to unnecessary red tape within the federal sector. We also heard about red tape that was in provincial and municipal jurisdictions as well.

I had the opportunity to sit on that commission with representation from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Catherine Swift was a representative on that commission. It actually brought forward the information, its analysis, that Canadian businesses bear a cost of approximately \$30 billion on an annual basis in trying to comply with red tape.

That is red tape that comes from the federal government, the provincial governments and the municipal governments. What is distressing is that oftentimes there is a duplication or a redundancy in that red tape from the federal level, the provincial level and the municipal level.

I am so excited to see that the federal government is committed to continue on the effort of the red tape reduction commission to continue to see red tape slashed at the federal level. It has made the commitment that it is going to reduce that red tape to a manageable level to help support small businesses.

Unfortunately, red tape disproportionately affects small businesses. Large businesses have large accounting firms and large legal representation, and are able to manage to get through it. Disproportionately small businesses are affected by it.

As a member who comes from the small business sector, I am really pleased and very thankful to see that our government is going to continue to reduce red tape for small businesses across this country.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your appointment as Deputy Speaker.

I do have a question. The member speaks very highly of small businesses and makes reference to the clearing up of red tape. Ultimately, I would look to the member to respond and perhaps provide some clarification.

Priorities are established within a budget. Clearly, it would appear that the priorities of this government are geared toward large corporations.

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If we take a look at the tax breaks being given to large corporations over small businesses, in essence it is clear that the government believes it will be the large corporations that will provide future opportunities. That contradicts what most economists and others would suggest, that it will be small businesses that will drive the economy into the future.

Why is there a mixed up priority in terms of where the tax breaks are?

• (1330)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I am hoping that my colleague across the way has an opportunity to read the budget.

I know the speech yesterday was truncated. As a result, much of it was a review of the budget that had been presented. However, there are a number of different provisions within the budget that will directly affect and benefit small businesses.

Obviously, I talked about the red tape reduction. I cannot overstate the importance of that.

Also, there is the new hiring credit for small businesses geared directly toward small business owners who want to create jobs in our local communities. We know there will be employers who will create the most jobs during this time as our economy recovers. That is the first initiative. The second is supporting young entrepreneurs through the youth business foundation activities. There is \$20 million going toward that for the upstart of small businesses.

We support community futures organizations across this country that help support small businesses. We also see the extending of work-sharing agreements. I know in my community there are many businesses that have utilized that. These are important provisions. I have several others, but I know my time is up.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time rising in the House, I would like to mention that I am thankful to the good people of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody for returning me to this House, as well as to my family, my wife Lynda, and the campaign volunteers and supporters who helped in that re-election.

I would also like to offer my congratulations to you as Chair and to my hon. colleague from Peace River on his re-election.

My question to the member relates to action on climate change.

As the member well knows, climate change is certainly being felt in the north. This is an area where he is from and familiar with. I would like to ask the member, what is the government proposing in this budget to mitigate the effects of climate change?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his re-election as well.

There are a number of provisions within this budget and I will not get to all of them. However, one that is very important to people who live in my community, especially in the northern communities, is the opportunity to benefit from the home retrofit program. That will help individuals insulate and create more energy-efficient homes. We know that the best energy savings is when we are able to reduce our consumption and create a better home. It helps on the environmental side and also aids in supporting families.

What we know is that energy costs consume a significant portion of the family budget. Therefore, any time there are investments made toward reducing energy costs for family homes, that is a good thing for the environment. It is also a good thing for families in general.

As well, there are several other provisions within the budget providing investments to technologies right from farming to all types of new and emerging technologies. There are investments for that. Obviously, those will play an important role in terms of protecting our environment as well.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

My congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as Deputy Speaker and chair of the committee of the whole.

I am pleased to rise in the House as a spokesperson for the constituents of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. It was an incredible opportunity for me to stand for the New Democratic Party in the last election and to talk with my constituents about its plans and programs. The warmth and receptiveness of the good citizens, whether they voted for me or not, was truly overwhelming and I certainly appreciate it. As has been said, regardless of whether I got their vote, once elected I am the member of Parliament for all constituents of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Since the election, I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of groups. As can be appreciated, regardless of how hard one worked during the campaign, one's duties commence immediately upon the time of election.

Of the groups I have had the opportunity to meet with one was DASC Industries. This is an organization that provides important work opportunities for women and men who have certain challenges. It is looking for some capital support from the government, which is a proposal that I have indicated my support for.

Some of the groups that I had the opportunity to have some discussion with since the election are: Evergreen House, an important museum in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour; the Cole Harbour Heritage Museum; a group of parents for a local elementary school in Dartmouth North; the Take Action Society; the Supportive Housing for Young Mothers; Dartmouth Learning Centre; Main Street Dartmouth and Area Business Improvement Association; Boys & Girls Club of East Dartmouth; and, of course, my good friends whom I swim and work out with at the Dartmouth YMCA. When I go home to Dartmouth—Cole Harbour on the weekends and once the House rises, I will have the opportunity to do more of that.

As well, on June 5, I had the opportunity to participate in a D-Day parade organized by Branch 31 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

I look forward to seeing my colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, continue to stand as our veterans affairs critic and an advocate for seniors. I would urge the government, as I know he would, to take measures toward fixing the clawback on veterans pensions and give these brave men and women the respect and support they deserve.

I also look forward to my role in international trade and will work to make sure that we enter into strong agreements that strive to support and protect workers, communities, producers, and the environment both here at home and abroad.

My main priority in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour at this point is to engage in dialogue with non profit and community organizations, police, veterans, families, seniors, businesses, and as many people and groups that I can, to hear their stories, realities, ideas and solutions, and bring those voices to Parliament.

Right now, part of my community is struggling with crime issues and I had the opportunity to meet with the chief of police and HRM. These crime issues cannot be solved by overly simplified approaches such as tougher laws and more prisons. I suggest to members opposite that it requires innovative, responsive community-based approaches.

● (1335)

Many communities that are struggling with inadequate health care services must have their needs and concerns addressed. Many young families are teetering on the brink of financial crisis because the cost of daily living keeps rising but their income, their security and their prospects for good jobs are not.

Indeed, there are issues in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and in communities across this country that the government is in a position to impact in a significant and positive way if only there were a commitment and a political will to work with and for all the people of Canada who possess a wealth of insight and experience. We would be wise to draw from that fantastic resource.

The people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour sent me here to do some very important things: to be their voice in the House of Commons; to represent their thoughts and interests; to work as a member of this Parliament to make their lives better, their communities stronger and our country better and stronger; and to help shape our nation into the thriving, sustainable and compassionate global leader we all know we can be.

I am ever mindful of that job and of the commitment and responsibility that accompanies it. I am also deeply grateful to the people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the trust they have placed in me. I intend to work very hard to ensure I live up to my end of that bargain.

That is why I feel it is so important to draw attention to the weaknesses in the budget presented before the House yesterday. This is not a budget designed with the Canadian family in mind. It does not acknowledge the reality that the people in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and across this country are facing.

This budget will see cuts to DFO and to ACOA. It makes no commitments of any substance to the people I am here to represent. It barely even gives a nod to the millions of Canadians who voted for change in this country. For the most part, the budget caters to those who, I would suggest, are already doing quite well and ignores the very real and pressing needs of many of our citizens. It does nothing to create meaningful social or economic progress for Canadians.

To point to job creation numbers as a sign of success when many of those jobs are part-time with no benefits, no security and a

The Budget

minimum wage that is not a living wage, is not progress. To cut this country's deficit by cutting the very programs and services that many Canadians count on and to not even be up front about where and how deep those cuts will be is not progress. To put the interests of large corporations and the interests of the Prime Minister and his closest allies ahead of the interests of Canadians and citizens who work hard every day to support their families and their communities, the people who are the heart and soul of this country, is not progress.

As the official opposition, we are more than a voice for our constituents. On behalf of our nation, we are also the eyes, the ears and, where needed, the conscience of this House. The budget does not sit particularly well with that conscience because it fails to address or even recognize the needs of Canadian families.

We have been charged with holding the government accountable to all the people of this country. It is a critically important job and we have every intention of living up to our end of the bargain. Will the Government of Canada live up to the bargain that it made with all Canadians, and not just the ones who voted it into power? I say to the members opposite that hope springs eternal.

● (1340)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his election to this House and on his speech.

However, it never ceases to amaze me how he can ignore the facts, and there are a number of facts that he ignored in his speech. One fact is that more than 70% of Canadians voted against his party, so he cannot presume to represent them today. Another fact is the 540,000 net new jobs. He refers to them as part-time, low wage, low sector but he has obviously failed to read the budget. On page 30, it is very clear that 85% are full-time jobs and 90% of them are in the high-wage industries.

Why would my colleague oppose a budget that has many of the initiatives within it that will help to create new jobs, high-paying jobs, such as the extension of the capital cost allowance that will allow businesses to invest in innovation and new technology which will make them more efficient and, therefore, create jobs for Canadians?

● (1345)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his kind words of congratulation.

I want to be clear. Canada is now in a position where there are 300,000 jobs less than there were when the recession started. If the member opposite would like to come to my community of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, he would recognize some of the serious problems associated with unemployment.

The Budget

While the government loves to stand up and preach with numbers about what a great job it has done with the economy, he would see in my community and in many other communities throughout this country that there are considerable numbers of Canadians who, as a result of the government, are not only without jobs, but they are without employment insurance, and that is a shame.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his arrival in the House.

I want to discuss the high unemployment numbers that he talked about. I come from a riding that has above average unemployment. We have discussed pilot projects in the House for quite some time. One particular pilot project provides benefits for the best 14 weeks of employment, which calculates the best weeks a person has produced as opposed to the last 14 weeks, which would give them decreased benefits. The government talks about small business but, in rural Canada especially, this is one of the things small business is claiming that it wants and need but it has been extended for only one year.

We have a pilot project that has been going on for approximately five years, so the government should do it or get off the proverbial pot, as it were. In this particular instance, does the member believe that these pilot programs under employment insurance should be made permanent?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity in a former career to spend quite a bit of time in the hon. member's riding, in communities like Gander, Grand Falls and Windsor. It is a fantastic place with unbelievable people. The women and men in those communities are truly the strength of this country. I congratulate him for having the honour of representing those fine people.

What the government has done with the employment insurance system is truly a travesty. In this budget we have seen the government increase premiums while it is continuing to cut benefits.

While the numbers of unemployed are at record levels in this country, people in communities like Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, in communities like those of the member who asked the question, are not eligible for employment insurance or for programs that could be made available to help transition those people into meaningful work and to help those people subsist, pay for the food and the lodging that their families so desperately need while they are looking for work.

We, as the official opposition, will continue to fight for a better, more improved employment insurance system.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Madam Speaker, not so many weeks ago, in the middle of the federal election campaign, I met a Newfoundland fisherman by the name of Paul Critch. Paul owns a 60-footer and she was tied up at Prosser's Rock boat basin on the south side of St. John's Harbour, the largest fishing port in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Paul is about my age, maybe a couple of years younger, in his early 40s. He is strong and he is capable. We do not see as many such men on the wharfs these days I am sad to report. Paul Critch is also a fifth generation fisherman. We stood there on the wharf on the edge of the North Atlantic Ocean, about as far away from Ottawa as

one can get in this country, a place that many federal bureaucrats, even those with DFO, probably cannot even imagine. We had a conversation about the fishery and where the fishery was headed.

Paul said that he named his boat *Chelsea and Emily* after his two daughters. Upon the birth of his second daughter, Paul said that his father remarked, "Thank God it is not a boy. A grandson would have to go into the fishery, and who wants that?"

This is what Newfoundland and Labrador has come to in terms of our once great fishery, the greatest fishery in the world on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the fishery that we presented to Canada in 1949.

Sixty-two years later and our commercial groundfish fishery for species such as cod and flounder are on their knees. They have been managed to annihilation. *History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse* is the title of a book that was released in 2010. As the title indicates, managed annihilation contends that northern cod were administered into virtual extinction. I give members three guesses as to who did the administering.

We are supposed to run out of oil. We are not supposed to run out of fish. We have hit rock bottom. The time to rebuild is now. Better late than never.

It has been 20 years since the northern cod moratorium and commercial fishing was stopped off the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador for the first time in 500 years. It has been 20 years since the biggest layoff in Canadian history and what has been done? Nothing. Rebuilding is the furthest thing from the mind of the Conservative government. Rebuilding is a foreign concept.

I sat and listened to the Minister of Finance, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, Monday as he tabled his budget. I listened to every word. It is a wonderful thing to be able to hear a member of Parliament when he or she speaks.

I compliment the leader of the New Democrats, the leader of Her Majesty's official opposition, for his no heckling policy. Before this life, I worked as a journalist for almost 20 years. I have sat in the gallery of my home legislature and watched as politicians behaved like insolent children. It is not a pretty sight and it can be an embarrassing sight.

As I read this morning in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

We need passionate, even biting, debate in Parliament. What we don't need are childish insults and grandstanding.

Well done I say to the Leader of the Opposition and member for Toronto—Danforth.

I listened to the Minister of Finance when he spoke so proudly of the budget but I saw more of the same for my province. We have hit rock bottom but the Conservative government sees fit to pound us further into the ground. That will be enough of that.

Under program review, the Conservative government has seen fit to further cut the budget of Fisheries and Oceans Canada by almost \$85 million. That will be \$9.1 million gone this fiscal year, \$18.9 million gone in 2012-13 and a further \$56.8 million gone in 2013-14. That will be \$84.8 million less for the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to continue doing what little work it is doing today. On top of that, according to federal budget estimates, DFO's overall budget is almost \$145 million less this fiscal year than last fiscal year, plus, as I have outlined, \$87 million in savings targeted by the Conservative government in cuts to DFO.

• (1350)

To make matters worse, and, yes, they can still get worse, the Minister of Finance spoke in this chamber Monday about finding a further \$4 billion in savings. Where is that \$4 billion going to come from? From fisheries? As they say where I come from, "You can't get blood from a turnip". The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador have nothing left to give.

What I so dearly would have loved for the Minister of Finance to announce Monday was an inquiry into the fall of the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries. The fisheries fell almost 20 years ago and they have yet to rise. The question is, why? The call for an inquiry is supported by my party, the New Democratic Party. Where does the Conservative government stand on an inquiry into the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries?

John Crosbie once asked, "Who hears the fishes when they cry?" I can answer that: no one.

I have another question, a bigger one. Who hears the fishermen when they cry? The New Democrats hear the cry.

Do the Conservatives hear the fishermen when they cry, the few fishermen who are left?

I will continue to listen when members opposite take to their feet. The fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador will be listening as well.

Maybe some day we will want our sons to be fishermen again and our sons will want to be fishermen.

• (1355)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the chamber. I have a question for him.

It is very difficult for our sons and daughters to be involved in the fishery these days. We are looking at a situation where most management decisions based on science are going to go through a pattern of quick decisions and last-minute decisions. The people who are serious about the fishery, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador but throughout the rest of the country, will be in a position where there is complete uncertainty, uncertainty for my riding and for his riding. Therefore, the government has to get serious about this. The cuts that the Conservatives talk about proves that this will be a bad situation that will become worse in the very near future.

My colleague has a point. Where is that \$4 billion going to come from?

Statements by Members

How badly will this impact the management decisions, particularly in science, in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. Where is the \$4 billion in cuts going to come from?

Until the Conservative government outlines where it plans on saving that \$4 billion, the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador, the fishermen of eastern Canada, will all be on pins and needles, waiting for the axe to drop. That is not a way for fishermen to live.

We have a history in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery of 500 years. Now it is to the point where the sons of fishermen no longer want to do what their fathers did, no longer want to take to the sea.

We need an inquiry for a number of reasons.

We need to investigate science. Where does science stand within the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

We need to investigate management, in particular. The management of the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries has been a complete and utter failure. For proof, we need look no further than to the sea. There are few boats on the water and few fishermen on the sea.

We need to look into quotas. Who holds the rights to quotas of fish off the waters of Newfoundland and Labrador? Who is fishing the quotas? Are the boats that are fishing the quotas registered? If they are registered in Canada, who owns the vessels? Are they owned by Canadians?

We need to look into the marketing of the fish. Is the marketing being done by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, by Canadians, or is it being done by foreigners?

I ask these questions but I do not expect answers. I do not think the Conservative government knows them. For the questions that I have asked in the past, I have not been given answers. I have been told that the answers may impact negatively on international relations, not Newfoundland and Labrador relations but international relations.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have two minutes for questions and comments after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NIAGARA REGION CHIEF OF POLICE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to an outstanding constituent of Niagara West—Glanbrook, the Niagara Regional Police Service Chief of Police, Wendy Southall.

Chief Southall will be at Rideau Hall tomorrow to be invested into the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. Forty-three distinguished men and women from across Canada will be recognized tomorrow by Governor General David Johnston. Chief Southall will be one of only seven to be invested as an Officer of the Order.

Statements by Members

Chief Southall began her policing career in 1970 in Toronto, joining Niagara Regional in 1982 and has risen through the ranks, performing with distinction in each of the many roles she has undertaken.

In her inaugural speech as chief of police in 2005, Wendy placed her number one priority on “keeping our streets safe in a cost effective manner with innovative changes”. She has always worked toward this goal and under her leadership the already low crime rate in the Niagara Region has been further reduced.

I thank Chief Wendy Southall for her service to our community and congratulate her on receiving this exceptional recognition.

● (1400)

[Translation]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank my leader and his team for their help and support, which have been so valuable, as well as the people of Montcalm for their support and their great vote of confidence. I can assure them that we will continue to work tirelessly to meet the needs of today's families.

I would especially like to share my election victory with all members of the Handami Association and all Canadians with disabilities. I fully intend to use this opportunity to increase awareness among the members of the House regarding the importance of social programs to combat isolation and to allow people with disabilities to play an active role in our society.

I truly hope that together we will find real solutions to improve the quality of life of all Canadians, including Canadians with disabilities.

TOBIQUE—MACTAQUAC

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, the people of Tobique—Mactaquac did me the honour of electing me to represent them as their member of Parliament for the third time. I want to thank them for the confidence they have placed in me.

[English]

I want to express my appreciation to the many volunteers who worked hard for our team and the tremendous support from my family.

May was also bittersweet in that, on May 23, we said goodbye to our mother after a long battle with Alzheimer's. I remember back in 2003 when I first told mom I would be offering for political office, her immediately reply was that I was crazier than heck.

However, she stood by me and I know that the values she taught us, of hard work, honesty, integrity and commitment to family, friends and community, have played a major part in my success to date and the many positive relationships built in Tobique—Mactaquac since 2006.

Again, I thank the residents of Tobique—Mactaquac for their support, and I thank mom for all the special training she gave us growing up. There is a hole in our hearts with mom gone. We miss her and we love her.

ZERO FORCE CYCLING TEAM

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday three extraordinary young men set off on a 7,200 kilometre bike ride across Canada.

Drew Steeves, Mitch Torrens and Laurent Gazaille, the riders of the Zero Force Cycling Team, are graduates of John Abbott College in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis. They will spend the summer biking from Vancouver to Halifax to raise awareness and funds for Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire's child soldier initiative.

[Translation]

This is a fine example of young people helping young people. The three cyclists and the volunteers travelling with them are almost all under 20. They decided to do something to help the 250,000 children around the world who are forced to live in unimaginable brutality.

[English]

I invite all hon. colleagues to join me in wishing the Zero Force Cycling Team a safe and successful journey across our great land. Please visit www.cyclingwithzeroforce.com to link up with the Zero Force riders and join in their mission to end the child soldier crisis, perhaps by arranging to greet and welcome them as they pass through the members' communities.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday was the Logan Lake High School graduation in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. My thoughts were certainly with those young students. Graduation is a special time with their hopes, dreams and aspirations all before them.

It is not lost on me that the work we will do in this 41st Parliament can have an important role in their future. If we are to succeed, these students will need jobs and a strong economy. However, often the policies that encourage economic growth and investment are opposed.

If we oppose economic growth and investment, are we prepared to accept increased taxes and debt or reduced services? Often we are not.

I ask that in this 41st Parliament we stay mindful of grandparents to be able to retire with dignity, mindful that we cannot leave an unpayable burden of debt to our children and mindful that now is our time as parliamentarians to work together to build a bright future for all Canadians.

• (1405)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry for the confidence they showed in me on May 2. The people have chosen the NDP, a party that addresses their interests and works for families.

Since 2004, in Beauharnois—Salaberry, five major companies have closed their doors, leaving more than 2,200 people out of work. I am talking about Cleyn & Tinker, Huntingdon Mills, Gildan, Goodyear and Rio Tinto Alcan. What is more, the Lake St. Francis National Wildlife Area has had its budget cut by 60%. With an employment insurance system that is inaccessible to far too many people, making ends meet is not easy for many workers back home.

I am committed to making the creation of high-quality, full-time jobs my priority. The government has to convert its rhetoric into concrete measures for workers—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga South.

* * *

[English]

MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to tell members about some of the great events that I was privileged to attend this past weekend in my riding of Mississauga South.

After the official opening of the Port Credit Farmers Market, I was delighted to attend an re-enactment of a citizenship swearing-in ceremony at the Canadian Pavilion of Carassauga.

The Mississauga rotary club's annual lobster festival followed, where about 750 guests cracked open thousands of claws and dipped 2,800 pounds of east coast lobster into vats of artery-clogging melted butter.

On Sunday, I attended Canoe the Credit, a fundraiser for the youth corps of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. Its slogan, "Our Credit is Good", sums up perfectly how we feel about this beautiful river. I would like to thank the young people for caring about water quality in our community.

As we can see, Mississauga South is a vibrant and energetic place to live. I feel immensely fortunate to represent the wonderful people of Mississauga South.

* * *

SLAVE LAKE

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the town of Slave Lake, Alberta has been devastated by wildfires. Much of the town has been burned, including many homes and businesses. The outpouring of support from all over Alberta and the country has been appreciated. I am particularly proud of central Albertans who have volunteered their time and donated needed items.

Statements by Members

Jo Dumont, the owner of Dumont Fitness in Red Deer, along with Shelley Boston and Tom and Jordana Simms helped to organize what they thought would be a small relief effort for Slave Lake. Soon after the word got out, the endeavour became a major project. The Red Deer gym became a hub for central Albertans to donate food, clothing and bottled water, eventually sending five semi-truckloads of goods from Red Deer to the Slave Lake area.

Central Albertans have a great history of helping their neighbours and pulling together when disaster strikes. I witnessed such community spirit first-hand after the Pine Lake tornado and it has been repeated again.

I would like to congratulate Dumont Fitness and all of the donors for helping the people of Slave Lake.

* * *

NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so humbled and honoured to have been given the confidence of the citizens and families of Newton—North Delta to represent their concerns in the House. Although my riding is one of the most diverse ridings in this country, their concerns are exactly the same as the concerns that voters expressed throughout the country.

My riding is made up of families that are diverse culturally, ethnically, linguistically and economically, but every one of these families, when I met them on their doorsteps, expressed a deep concern for the future of their children and our way of life in Canada, from the cost of tuition to the cost of care for their parents and the elderly, from the price of child care and gasoline to the general cost of living. They are very worried. They are worried about their pensions, their jobs and about our public health care system. They are generally worried about their standard of living and the future of our country.

I make a commitment to be their voice—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to rise for the first time in the House. May I thank my neighbours, the great voters of Mississauga—Brampton South, for their kindness and support. I promise to repay their trust with an immense amount of hard work.

Statements by Members

To start, our Conservative majority government is providing support for families in a number of ways: a new children's art tax credit on up to \$500 in eligible fees; a new family caregiver tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types; an enhanced medical expense tax credit removing the limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a financially-dependent relative; an extension on the eco-energy retrofit homes program; and full-time students will now be allowed to earn more money without affecting their loans by doubling the in-study exemption to \$100 per week and giving them a tax break on certification fees.

Our strong, stable national Conservative majority government is delivering for Canadian families.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

SOCIAL ECONOMY

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no value more Canadian than lending a helping hand to others. There is no better shared ambition than making sure that everyone is happy.

As a result, countless professionals and volunteers devote their talents and energy to building support networks that, each day, transform the lives of Canadians by helping them to maintain their dignity and hope.

However, the government must provide financial support equivalent to the well-recognized generosity of Canadians.

When we see the efforts that stakeholders in the social economy are making to manage their minuscule budgets, it is difficult to understand how the government can “strengthen compliance requirements with respect to certain organizations” and “limit unintended or excessive benefits”, as it proposes in chapter 4.2 of its budget.

Rather than sowing seeds of doubt, the NDP proposes that we provide unfailing support and encouragement to those devoted to working for the common good.

* * *

[English]

SENIORS

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to stand for the first time in the House of Commons to represent the people of Simcoe—Grey, who elected me.

Our strong, stable national Conservative majority government is continuing to support seniors through the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We are enhancing the GIS. Now, eligible low-income seniors will receive additional annual top-up benefits of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across Canada. We are enhancing the new horizons for seniors program by providing an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors, and to expand awareness of elder abuse.

We are expanding the targeted initiative for older workers through an additional \$50 million to extend that initiative. We are eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees. This gives seniors more choices.

Our strong, stable national Conservative majority government is standing up for seniors.

* * *

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, wilful blindness is evident when there are things we could know and should know but somehow we manage not to know. The human capacity to ignore what is in front of us is staggering. A Harvard study asked subjects watching a basketball game to count the number of passes. No one noticed a woman in a gorilla suit standing at centre court for nine seconds.

The government has been made aware that over 12,500 treatment procedures for CCSVI have now been undertaken worldwide in over 50 countries and that some MS patients report improved quality of life, including reduced brain fog and fatigue and improved circulation and motor skills, following the procedure. We need evidence-based medicine in Canada.

Why then is there the refusal to undertake a nationally funded, multi-centre clinical trial to determine if treating CCSVI will improve the quality of life of MS patients?

Multiple treatment trials are under way in the U.S. It is time for Canada to act.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA'S ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will provide assistance to families and communities.

For example, we are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for seniors who rely almost exclusively on old age security benefits and on this supplement.

The new annual top-up benefit will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across the country.

We are creating a tax credit for family caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law spouses and minor children.

We will also create a children's arts tax credit to help parents pay for artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities for their children.

In good times, as in bad times, the government has always made responsible choices to ensure a better quality of life for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the voters in York South—Weston, who sent me here to advocate for them. I will do my utmost to bring forward their issues in this House, like public transit.

Public transit supports economic activity, improves productivity and, done right, it helps clean the air. In York South—Weston, public transit is an important public service, as it is across Canada.

Unfortunately, public transit is not a priority of the government. Aside from the gas tax rebate negotiated nearly a decade ago by then-FCM president, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, the current federal government refuses to support this crucial element of our economic life. This must change if we are to help Canadians in their daily life.

The federal government must develop a national public-transit strategy so that sensible investments in public transit like electric light rail can be made to meet the needs of millions of Canadians.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on the economy, supporting hardworking Canadians and their families and completing the economy recovery.

Yesterday, we introduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth. Here is what is being said about it.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said:

We applaud the Government of Canada for committing in today's budget to develop a new long-term infrastructure plan in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), provinces, territories, and the private sector.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons noted that it was very happy to see the increase in the guaranteed income supplement, an issue that it had raised many times before and that was finally being addressed.

The Certified General Accountants Association of Canada stated:

—we're happy with today's federal budget because many—including families, seniors and small businesses—will benefit from the measures announced today.

We remain focused on supporting hardworking Canadians and their families.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is most disappointing about the throne speech and the budget is that the government refuses to acknowledge the employment crisis. There are 300,000 more unemployed people than there were before the recession. The jobs that the government is boasting that it has created are temporary, precarious and part-time.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to acknowledge the failure of his job creation policies, which the people need right now?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Toronto—Danforth for becoming the Leader of the Opposition. This is a historical first for his party. He should be proud.

Creating jobs remains a major priority for this government. We have one of the best records in this regard among developing countries, and we will continue to move in that direction.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my congratulations to the Prime Minister as well for his successful election.

The government seems to be pinning its entire solution to the job situation on one response: the reduction of corporate tax rates to big profitable companies. However, the strength of our education system, the skills of the workforce, the reliability of our health care system, the state of our infrastructure, these are all vitally important issues when investors make decisions and, as an economist, I am sure the Prime Minister would know.

Why not—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the government's emphasis on job creation involves many priorities, not just keeping taxes low, which is critically important, but also, as the throne speech and other government documents have said, critical investments in infrastructure, investments in research and education, investments in trade, making sure we open markets to Canadian businesses.

These priorities explain why Canada has one of the best job creation records among the developed countries in the post-recession period.

* * *

• (1420)

THE BUDGET

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has labelled his \$17 billion in cuts to the budget over the next five years as modest. He said his critics are living in a fantasy world if they think that these will affect essential services.

Oral Questions

What about the unemployed who cannot get the benefits they need? Are they living in a fantasy world? What about the seniors who have seen their pensions disappear? Are they living in a fantasy world? What about families without family doctors? Are they living in a fantasy world?

I have a simple question. What services will Canadians have to do without when the Prime Minister is finished his cuts?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, Canadians expect us to manage their tax dollars wisely. We are looking at budget reductions in the neighbourhood of less than 2% across the entire size of government, 5% in operational expenses over a three-year period. Canadians expect us to cut this kind of fat and find these kinds of efficiencies.

This government has been very clear. We will not cut pensions. We will not cut transfers to the provinces for major programs such as health care.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to scare people with the deficit issue. However, a year ago, the minister's deficit projections were off by \$13 billion. He has changed his mind three times in six months. He lacks credibility.

Before cutting programs and services, should the Minister of Finance not put his books in order and give the people the real figures?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of balancing our budget and eliminating the deficit.

[English]

If members do not mind, I would like to quote the IMF, which said very clearly:

—Canada's overall fiscal outlook...stands out as among the best in the G20.

That is proof that our economic action plan did its job. It is proof that the next phase of our economic action plan has some wherewithal to deal with the problems that we see here in Canada.

I would hope that the opposition members would side with us and vote for our budget.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, she should tell that to the millions who are unemployed or underemployed. It is simply not good enough.

The government's plan for billions in corporate tax cuts means only one thing: cuts to programs and services that Canadians rely on, cuts to seniors living in poverty and cuts for struggling families, or is it really cuts to health care? These cuts are not worth the cost.

Will the minister cancel his reckless across-the-board corporate tax giveaways and invest in the things Canadians count on, like health care, infrastructure and the small businesses that create jobs?

Will he do that?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March we presented the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It was a positive plan to keep taxes low. That is what Canadians were asking for.

This plan is now going to support the creation of jobs. It is going to support Canadians in every effort that they want to push forward. Almost every organization has supported the fact that we want to lower those corporate taxes so that corporations can actually produce those jobs.

If those taxes go up, as proposed by the NDP, consumers will pay and workers will pay.

We will not do that to the Canadian public.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will be aware that 25 million Canadians file their income taxes. Of those 25 million, 15 million actually pay taxes and 10 million do not.

I have a very simple question for the Prime Minister. In dealing with the tax credits which were announced in the budget for piano lessons and art lessons and for taking care of loved ones, I would like to ask the Prime Minister why 10 million Canadians and more have been cut off and disqualified from being able to receive those tax credits because they have not—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate also the member for Toronto Centre on becoming the interim leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The budget has many important programs, many important benefits, some of which the leader of the Liberal Party mentioned, including some of the important tax credits for Canadian families, for caregivers and for children's arts.

I would encourage the Liberal Party, rather than just saying it should be more, to actually look at these things as positive benefits and to support these benefits for Canadians.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that most in need of programs have been excluded from Conservative programs.

At the same time, does the government realize that the approximate increase of \$1.67 per day in the guaranteed income supplement will not lift low-income seniors out of poverty and, above all, will not show them our respect for the country they have passed on to us?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the increase in the guaranteed income supplement is the largest increase in this benefit in the past 25 years. It is a much larger increase than has been made at any time by any previous government. I encourage the Liberal Party to do something positive and to support this increase, which is so important for our seniors.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's manufacturing sector is tanking, and we are losing construction jobs. Construction starts are down now. Good full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time work.

Instead of offering short-term band-aids, will the minister extend the eco-energy retrofit program and the accelerated cost program for manufacturers for a full five years? This would allow Canadian employers and families to focus on the long term, to make long-term decisions to create good full-time jobs.

Will the minister do this?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to congratulate my colleague for once again being elected to the House.

I want to reiterate that in this budget we have in fact extended the eco-energy retrofit program. That will allow Canadian families to make their homes more energy efficient. That will protect our environment.

There are a number of very good budget measures. I would encourage my colleague to read the budget so that he can see them very clearly for himself.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians have to get by without the medical care they need because they do not have a family doctor. This means more families are turning to emergency rooms just for primary care. Not only is this hurting the health of Canadians, but it also increases the pressure on emergency rooms and costs millions more for everyone.

Will the government finally agree to work with the provinces and the territories to hire more health care professionals?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member is well aware, the health accord expires in 2014, not this year, not next year and not the year after.

In the meantime, our government will continue to work with the provinces and the territories on the present accord and priorities identified, such as encouraging the statutory review of the accord in both the Senate and the House, as well as to be supportive of the provinces and territories in the reduction of wait times.

We have also gained a lot of ground on establishing electronic health records and a number of other initiatives.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after seven years with that health accord, none of it is translated into doctors for Canadian families.

The Conservatives had a second chance to address this in the budget but, incredibly, they let it go. The fact is that Canada needs thousands of new doctors and nurses stat, and the provinces are looking to the federal government to help solve this need.

Oral Questions

Again, will the government work with us to improve these front-line services so that Canadian families get the health care they need and deserve?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government supports the efforts of the provinces and territories to effectively manage their health care providers so that there are adequate numbers of medical practitioners available to their residents.

While the supply of physicians and nurses is a provincial and territorial responsibility, our government has increased health care transfers to the provinces and territories by more than 33% since we formed the government.

As well, I recently announced federal funding to support more than 100 family medicine residents to receive training in provinces to provide medical services to remote and rural communities.

* * *

[Translation]

FOOD INSPECTION

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the E. coli outbreak in Europe, in Germany in particular, Canadians have good reason to be concerned about the safety of their food. This crisis emerged despite the fact that Germany has a better food inspection system than Canada.

Can the government assure Canadians that our food inspection system will protect them from this type of harm?

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food safety is of key importance to this government.

We are taking measures to protect Canadians against what is happening in the European Union. CFIA is implementing enhanced border controls on vegetables from the European Union. If affected products are found, CFIA will facilitate recalls to keep Canadian families safe.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard this story before. The government promises \$100 million over five years for food safety, yet the budget delivers \$9 million in the first year, \$8 million in the second year and, of course, nothing after that.

In 2009 the government promised to fix food inspection in this country, yet here we are again with the same old promises. Why should Canadians trust the Conservatives now?

Will the minister commit to increasing and accelerating the funding in the first two years to ensure that food safety is safe for all Canadians?

Oral Questions

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that a report on OECD countries recognized that Canada's superior food safety system ranks us the best in the world on food recalls.

Speaking of the budget, our recent budget includes an additional \$100 million over five years to enhance food safety. Will the member who is so concerned about food safety support this budget?

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today a quarter of a million Canadian seniors live in poverty. Seniors who built this country and cared for us are struggling to afford basics like food, housing and prescription drugs.

Instead of lifting every senior out of poverty, the government chose to give the poorest seniors a mere \$50 a month.

How can the minister possibly explain why corporate tax giveaways are more important than raising all Canadian seniors out of poverty?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague once again for returning to this House. It is going to be a joy to work with her.

I want to address the very need of seniors. As we all know, seniors are expecting to have this increase in the guaranteed income supplement. I am hopeful that my colleague across the way is prepared to support the measure in the budget to increase the guaranteed income supplement for our seniors, and if not, why not.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, almost half the women over 65 who live alone have incomes below the poverty line. This government boasts about helping seniors, but it is giving crumbs to only a third of seniors in need.

Why is this government abandoning two-thirds of seniors in need, the majority of whom are women living alone?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to help our seniors, who helped build this great and beautiful country. That is why, in yesterday's budget, we included an increase to the GIS in order to help the most vulnerable seniors. I hope the NDP will support this effort to help these people.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, the president and CEO of the Canada Pension Plan explained that public pension funds were ripe for expansion. They will be viable for the next 75 years, and by 2050, they will be worth over one thousand billion dollars. Meanwhile, private pension funds lost billions of dollars during the recession.

Why is this government still asking Canadians to put their savings in private banks and mutual funds, rather than improving public pensions?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to welcome my new colleague across the floor.

We are working hard to improve retirement security for Canadians. Together with the provinces, we have invested in innovative proposals aimed at improving pensions even further. However, like the provinces, we have some concerns about the NDP's proposals. I would like to quote Raymond Bachand:

The proposed changes to the retirement income system must take into account the impact they may have on businesses and households, at a time when the global economic recovery remains hesitant.

● (1435)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families have always been told that if they saved a little and let the market work its magic, they would have enough funds when it came time to retire, but Canadian families who lost billions of dollars during the recession see this for just what it is: smoke and mirrors. Now, instead of expanding a healthy CPP, the government is moving full steam ahead with a risky private pooled pension plan.

Just whose side is the government on, Canadian families or their friends?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand again on behalf of pensioners.

We have been working very hard to improve Canadians' retirement security. For instance, we reformed the framework governing federally regulated pensions to better protect pensioners.

With the provinces, we mentioned the pooled registered pension plan. We are also looking at CPP reforms, but we and many provinces are very concerned about the proposition by the NDP to double the CPP.

I heard Catherine Swift of the CFIB state on CPAC just yesterday that they believe it would be a 60% to 70% increase to all businesses across the way. They are not in support of that.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Moncton are shocked to learn that some very respected members of their community are facing deportation.

The Maeng family have put down firm roots since moving to Canada eight years ago. They have built their own business, and their eldest son is studying to become a dentist.

Oral Questions

[English]

However, despite having disclosed their younger son's health problems from the outset, they are now being told that his autism and epilepsy disqualify them from permanent residency.

Will the minister commit to reviewing this troubling decision on humanitarian and compassionate grounds?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I congratulate the member on his re-election and his appointment as the immigration critic for the official opposition.

The member knows that the minister cannot comment on particular cases because of the Privacy Act. Having said that, there is a very fair process, including access to applications for permanent residency for humanitarian and compassionate reasons by individuals. Those are not considered by elected officials but by highly trained public servants.

I would point out that there is in our law provision for medical inadmissibility for those who the provinces deem would represent an undue burden to our tax-funded public health care system.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget shows no leadership on health care.

A 2004 health accord goal to reduce wait times calls for effective community services, including home care. After five years of Conservative government, there is still no national home care, and wait times for acute hospital beds remain unacceptably high.

While it dithers on the 2014 accord, will the government tell us what steps it will take to implement the wait times goal and create a national home care strategy?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our effort to support the provinces and territories to deliver health care we have increased the transfers by 33% since we formed government. We have also sent additional funding to the provinces and territories to help with a specific wait time guarantee. A number of provinces have made improvements in important wait time areas. Recently I announced over 100 family medicine residencies for rural practice.

As well, our government takes concrete action to support provinces and territories in delivering health care—

The Speaker: The member for Papineau.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agreement with the provinces on health will come to an end in barely three years. For quite some time now, the premiers of Quebec and Ontario, among others, have been calling on this government to convene a meeting with all the premiers, but to no avail. In fact, in his six years on the job, the Prime Minister has never held any formal meetings with his provincial counterparts on any topic.

When will he take his responsibility as Prime Minister seriously and initiate dialogue to plan the future of our health care system?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the health accord expires in 2014; not this year, not next year, and not the year after.

In the meantime, our government has been working with the provinces and territories on the present accord. We have encouraged the statutory review of the 2004 accord in both the Senate and the House. As well, we have been supported by the provinces and territories in the reduction of wait times. Also, we have gained a lot of ground in establishing electronic health records. Provinces and territories continue to deliver the—

● (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for York West.

* * *

SENIORS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after months of talk about the difficulties facing seniors throughout Canada, I am clearly disappointed in budget 2011. The \$1.67 a day for the poorest of the poor and non-refundable tax credits just do not cut it.

Given the increases on gas, hydro, food, et cetera, it is making it very difficult for people to cope on a day-to-day basis and stay in their homes. I heard this on the doorsteps in Toronto, but clearly the Conservatives did not.

Where is the vision, the plan to make a difference in the lives of seniors? Do they not deserve better? Are they just going—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first time to rise in the House, I would like to thank the voters of Richmond for voting me back in with 58.4%.

I would like to correct the member on some facts.

With the next phase of the economic action plan we are enhancing the GIS in the new horizons program. We are also ensuring the strength of the retirement income system and introducing a new family caregiver tax credit. In fact, when asked about these measures, CARP's Vice President of Advocacy said that their members are "happy and thrilled with these issues—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world. It is a great Canadian institution wholly owned and operated by Canadian farmers. Now the Conservative government wants to legislate it out of existence without even allowing the farmer producers to vote on it.

If there is such great merit in the government's position on the Wheat Board, why does it not follow the legislation and allow Prairie producers to have a democratic vote on it?

The Conservatives' majority does not mean they can run roughshod over democracy.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. speaker, certainly there was no vote for farmers who were forced into this monopoly in the first place. The real vote took place on May 2 when farmers across western Canada expressed their opinion about the Canadian Wheat Board and its monopoly in electing members on this side of the House to support them virtually right across the Prairies. Those farmers wanted the same freedom that other producers across this country have had for many years.

There appears to be a small group who do not want the Wheat Board to succeed after change. I hope the member opposite is not one of those people and that he will work with us to create a new environment for farmers.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no business case for abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board. It is an ideological crusade that defies reason, logic and even economics.

Before the Conservatives use the heavy hand of the state to deny farmers their democratic right to vote, will they at least table any cost benefit analysis, any research they might have, any impact study on the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay line in northern Manitoba, the rural economic base for rural communities?

Surely the Conservatives would have done this research before they would undermine the Prairie economy by destroying this great Canadian institution. Will they table it here today?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can see why the member has been moved off the portfolio that he had before, because he made as much of a fool of himself on that as he is on this issue.

We have a letter—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Jonquière—Alma.

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the Minister of Finance's optimism, there are close to 1.5 million unemployed workers in Canada. That is over 330,000 in Quebec alone.

What is even worse is that nearly 6 out of every 10 unemployed workers who have paid premiums for years are not entitled to receive benefits when they lose their jobs.

How can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development justify the fact that the budget tabled yesterday does not offer anything to the unemployed workers in my region?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said today, job creation is a major priority for our government. It is the best way to help unemployed workers. That is why the budget includes incentives for small businesses to hire new employees. In addition, the targeted initiative for older workers is still in place to help unemployed workers prepare for these jobs. I therefore hope that the hon. member will support these initiatives to help these people.

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are learning today that the former parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Defence saw hope that higher unemployment would help recruiting for the Canadian Forces. It is unbelievable.

Would the government tell the House whether it favours higher unemployment for this reason? Does this explain its lack of a proper job creation strategy?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our job creation strategy is far-ranging.

It includes helping small businesses by giving them incentives to hire new people. It gives them incentives to invest in new equipment to make them more productive and more competitive on the world stage.

We are trying to help people get back to work so that Canada can be as strong as it can possibly be competing on the global stage. We need to support workers. We need to support industry so it can grow.

FINANCE

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been a world leader as we continue along the path to economic recovery.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance comment on what Canada is doing to ensure our fiscal advantage?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank the member for her hard work on this file.

Last year we set out a three-point plan to return to budget balance by winding down the temporary stimulus, putting in place targeted spending restraint measures, and reviewing government administrative and overhead costs.

This year we are building on that plan by delivering on the 2010 strategic reviews, closing tax loopholes and launching a one-year government-wide strategic and operating review.

We remain on track to balance our budget by 2015-16.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the Conservatives' slogan throughout the election campaign was "Our region in power". Like many constituents in my region, I am very disappointed.

When we look at the government's plan, we see that the regions of Quebec are not a real priority for the government. In its budget, the government plans on cutting close to a third of the budget of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

Can the minister explain how these cuts to economic development agencies can benefit the regions of Quebec?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is a very important tool for all regions of Quebec. I visited the member's riding a number of times before he came along, and we have always worked for all regions of Quebec. With respect to his claims of cutting one-third of spending, I think he should take out his calculator and do his homework.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tax cuts for major corporations do not create jobs in the north. FedNor is a real economic driver in northern Ontario, and it would not cost anything to make this agency independent and protected from ministerial interference.

When will the minister make FedNor independent, like the other development agencies in Canada?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the member for Nickel Belt is in favour of a change that increases bureaucracy and not in favour of measures to lower unemployment.

[English]

On our side of the House, we are focused on making sure that FedNor is doing its job. That means ensuring services are out in northern Ontario helping northern Ontarians and Canadians get new jobs and new opportunity. That is the right way for FedNor to go.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget confirmed the government has no plan for getting people back to work. It gave billions of tax breaks to its Bay Street

buddies, but plans on cutting the western economic diversification fund.

Communities in western Canada need help recovering jobs lost in the recession. Why is the government cutting a program that helps create jobs in western Canada?

• (1450)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make the member aware that my department was given the responsibility of delivering key economic plan initiatives for the west. Through the RInC and CAF programs we invest in rinks, athletic parks, community halls, much needed facilities in communities across the four provinces. These were temporary programs designed to create jobs through the economic downturn, and since July 2009 we have created over 460,000 new jobs.

Our government believes in creating jobs and new opportunities. The member might want to know his party voted against that.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget shows the Conservatives have forgotten about Atlantic Canadians.

After cutting ACOA by \$64 million last year, the Minister of Finance, yesterday, promised a further \$15 million in cuts.

With the economic recovery still fragile and the jobless rate unacceptably high in Atlantic Canada, why is the minister choosing to make massive tax breaks for wealthy corporations while cutting regional development programs like ACOA?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his concern for Atlantic Canadians which we all share on this side of the House.

Canadians have given us a clear mandate to keep taxes low and to balance the budget. ACOA has identified a way to reduce its internal services cost, making it more efficient. What is important for the member to acknowledge and recognize is that all of ACOA's programs to business and to communities are supported—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Paul's.

Oral Questions

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sadly budget 2011 is an abdication of the government's responsibilities to aboriginal peoples.

I ask the minister how he thinks that aboriginal youth could prosper without education, a safe home and running water? How can the minister defend that yesterday's budget cuts funding to aboriginal housing by \$127 million below budget 2008, before the EAP? Where is the concerted action that was promised on Friday?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is building on its impressive record in major investments and unprecedented collaboration with aboriginals to increase the educational outcome for first nations children and to address priority areas such as water and waste water infrastructure. Our current budget builds on those investments and demonstrates our strong commitment.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear an answer to the question of the \$127 million being cut in this budget compared to the previous budget. Can the minister answer the question? Common courtesy in this House also means getting answers. It is only natural for the opposition to protest if it does not get an answer. Can he give us an answer regarding the \$127 million in cuts to aboriginal housing?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are very good at talking about process and very bad at getting concrete results.

We have invested major dollars during the stimulus spending program. This budget deals with the first nations land management, water, K-12, matrimonial real property and the investment in the major completion of the Dempster Highway. It had good reviews from the national aboriginal leaders. That is good for Canadians.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, Quebecers and Canadians were stunned when Justice James Brunton released about 30 accused people because of the delays expected in their megatrial. The police did their job. The prosecutors did their job. It is time for Parliament to do its job.

Would the Minister of Justice not agree that it is time to introduce a bill in Parliament to put an end to the problems caused by these megatrials?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his appointment as justice critic for the NDP.

This is certainly the time and it was certainly the time in the last Parliament when we introduced the fair and efficient criminal trials

act that would strengthen case management, reduce duplication and improve criminal procedure. That was a great piece of legislation. We are prepared to re-introduce it. I hope it has the support of the hon. member and his colleagues.

• (1455)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I can assure him that, in fact, it does have the support of this party and I believe of the Liberal Party as well. It is a welcome development that we move on this. This is a problem that we have known about for several years. In the last Parliament, Bill C-53 was here. We could have passed it at that time if the government had moved on it.

My question to the minister today is this. Will he pledge to the House that we will have the bill before the House and pass it before we leave in the spring?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): That is the easiest pledge I will ever make, Mr. Speaker. We all have an interest in improving the criminal justice system and this, hopefully, portends something new in this Parliament's support for justice legislation. I can assure the hon. member that bill will be tabled forthwith.

THE BUDGET

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that members of the cabinet are speaking directly to Canadians from coast to coast on important local issues and key items from yesterday's budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to please update the House on what ministers are saying in my riding of Calgary, and Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Moncton and St. John's.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome my good friend back to the House.

I would like to tell the House that we have had not just good, positive reaction from ministers but overwhelmingly positive reaction from across Canada. In fact, seniors are happy about our increased income support. Parents appreciate the new children's arts tax credit. Entrepreneurs are actually cheering for the hiring credit for small business.

Let me quote the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It stated:

[Budget 2011] took some important steps to enhance job creation and recognize the economic contributions of small businesses in Canada.

However, the best reaction—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was much relieved to learn yesterday that the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have patched up their differences over the diplomatic footaraw that got Canada kicked out of the UAE. The defence minister went on to say that the \$300 million cost of closing Camp Mirage was “completely false”.

In light of the new decorum in the House, would the minister tell the House what is the specific cost of closing the base, what will be the cost of opening the base in Kuwait, and will he table those costs in the House?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate advice from the member opposite in the Liberal Party on how to get along internally within a party. That is something I will keep very much in mind in the future.

However, with respect to the ongoing costs of maintaining a logistic hub in the Middle East, which is very important in supporting our ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and in fact throughout the region, there will be information forthcoming.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about employment. In 2010, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans cut snow crab quotas by more than half. Beforehand, with 20,000 metric tonnes, the plant workers were guaranteed eight weeks of work. Now, because of the reduced quotas, hundreds of people are ending up with less than a month of work and will not be eligible for employment insurance.

Will the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development work with the Government of New Brunswick to establish a community employment program and facilitate access to employment insurance benefits? Let us talk about jobs.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to help the unemployed. That is why yesterday's budget included the initiatives I have already talked about. I can assure hon. members that we are already sending very significant sums to the Government of New Brunswick to help support the unemployed who face constraints specific to that region. I encourage them to take advantage of this.

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government reintroduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a positive plan for Canada's future that will keep taxes low, support jobs and growth, improve the quality of life for seniors, families and children, control government spending, and stay on track to eliminate the deficit.

Oral Questions

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance please inform the House about what the reaction to our next phase of the economic action plan has been?

• (1500)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand again to cheer for this wonderful budget that was presented yesterday by the Minister of Finance. I must admit that there has been such an overwhelming positive response to this budget that I cannot quote every single person who has commented on it. I want to quote in French if the House would allow me.

[Translation]

According to the Conseil du patronat du Québec, “this budget creates an environment favourable to economic development without reducing transfers to individuals, businesses or other levels of government, and without proposing increases in taxes or tariffs...”

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

FLOODING IN MONTRÉRIE

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, historic floods in Montérégie will have lasting effects on our community, but we are finally beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Unfortunately, with this government, it is too little, too late. After more than 50 days of stress and frustration, flood victims are entitled to clear answers.

Can the minister confirm whether soldiers will stay to help flood victims with the cleanup?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): What I can confirm, Mr. Speaker, is that within 24 hours after predeploying, we had hundreds of Canadian Forces members on the ground in the region supporting the people who were suffering from this flood.

In total, over 844 soldiers helped to protect thousands of acres of farmland. They built two major dikes that needed repair. They put 224,000 sandbags in place and helped community members. They did check visits, went to residences with assistance, water and food. This was an outstanding effort by members of the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, over 50 days after the major flooding began in the Haut-Richelieu area, the Prime Minister visited the affected areas and clearly improvised an announcement to calm the rumble of discontent.

Since the fact that the government will assume 50% of the costs under its own cost-sharing program is not new and since the budget does not make any mention of new, additional aid, can the Prime Minister tell us how much money his new mitigation plan will give to flood victims in Montérégie and to those in the Gaspé who are still being ignored?

The Budget

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to work with the provinces in respect of disaster financial assistance. We have worked well with other provinces in respect of mitigation. New changes have been made to the disaster financial assistance agreement.

I note some of the Prime Minister's comments both during the election and during his well-received tour of the flood areas in Quebec.

I look forward to working on those details with the provinces and with my colleagues in cabinet.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that as a result of the order adopted Monday, June 6, two days will be allotted for the supply period ending June 23, 2011.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to apologize for the language I used earlier in the House. I could give an explanation as to why I said it, but I will not choose to do that at this point. I apologize for the language.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on being elected to the position of Speaker of the House. Congratulations.

I am also pleased to rise this afternoon to discuss our government's 2011 budget and I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Let me first thank my family for the love and support not only during the election campaign but also each and every day that I am asked to serve the people of Canada.

I would also like to thank the people of Red Deer for putting their faith in me once again by re-electing me to represent them in the 41st Parliament. It is an honour to serve and represent them.

It was made clear in the recent election that the people of Canada supported the direction and goals of our government. Canadians

want the economy to continue to be the number one priority and our government has listened.

I would also like to thank the Prime Minister and the finance minister for their invitation last winter to participate in the long and beneficial consultation process of budget 2011.

This budget contains many points that my constituents raised in round table discussions. I am glad to see that the government once again heard the input of my constituents. I appreciate the advice that every constituent has given me, from the Red Deer chamber of commerce to municipal councils and everyone in-between. Every view is important to me.

From the meetings I held in Red Deer and the surrounding area I heard a few recurring themes: continued elimination of red tape in government policies and bureaucratic procedures, continued reductions in personal taxes, and the cost of employment to businesses. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan helps to achieve these goals.

Red Deer is an extraordinary place where small and medium-sized businesses thrive. Its location in the corridor of Alberta provides immense economic advantages and makes it an ideal area to start a business. The people of Red Deer are independent and entrepreneurial, and they understand the impact that our fiscal policies have on them and the economy. They know that lower taxes provide the freedom to be profitable and to create more jobs, and that good social programs come from strong economic fiscal policy.

The economy though is still fragile. I know that the resilience and determination of the hard-working people of Red Deer will continue to prevail and succeed.

Canadians have given us a mandate to stay focused on the economy and to pass measures aimed at strengthening both our economic recovery and our country. We are following through on these commitments.

We are focused on improving the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors and families. I am pleased that budget 2011 proposes programs that will respond to the needs of central Alberta. For example, the hiring credit for small businesses in budget 2011 will be extremely helpful to many people who need jobs and many employers who need more employees.

The hiring credit will have a direct and positive impact on Red Deer by providing incentives to hire and create jobs. This credit addresses many of my constituents' concerns about keeping the cost of employment down to help stimulate more hiring.

We are also supporting job creation by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance, helping manufacturers and processors to make new investments in machinery and equipment.

There are still many Canadians who need to find work, and it is wonderful to see that the government is doing what is necessary to help them by spurring job growth and investment.

Business owners in Red Deer are also pleased with our efforts toward reducing red tape, and this is an issue that has repeatedly been addressed within our business community.

Upgrading the BizPal service and engaging business owners by further consulting Canadians through the red tape reduction commission is a welcome initiative to tackle the bureaucratic problems that my constituents face.

From employers to families, we have a strong record of tax relief. Canadian families are benefiting from tax relief measures such as the first-time home buyer's tax credit, the public transit tax credit, and the GST reductions.

Further individual tax relief measures in this budget will provide taxpayers in Alberta with approximately \$310 million more in tax relief over the next six years. This includes a new family caregiver tax credit which will provide almost \$73 million in relief and a new children's arts tax credit which will provide over \$69 million for Alberta families.

I am proud that we are offering a new tax credit for our volunteer firefighters who bravely serve our communities. We can attain these tax cuts while returning to balanced budgets because this is a government that is also focused on eliminating government waste and closing tax loopholes.

• (1505)

A secure and fair tax base allows us to maintain low tax rates.

I want to address central Alberta farmers as they finish seeding their fields. Agriculture is a primary sector of our local economy in central Alberta and so my round table discussions have included farmers who are a unique kind of business people. They face all of the challenges of other business owners and then some, with more risk, uncertainty and variable conditions from year to year.

Alberta is a bit unique as it is one of the few provinces that administers the agristability program for its producers. Therefore, we need to identify what needs to be done at the federal level and work with the Government of Alberta to address producers' needs.

We know that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food continues to work with all of his provincial counterparts to address gaps and strengthen the income support programs within the federal-provincial framework. We look forward to his continued leadership in this regard.

Budget 2011 provides \$50 million for a two-year agricultural innovation initiative. This new program will support knowledge creation and increase commercialization in agriculture innovations.

Innovation is a key component of farm gate profitability. Whether it is finding new varieties to increase yields or improving livestock genetics, innovation is the driving force for Canada's competitiveness and produces profits. Agriculture-related businesses and producers will all benefit from this important investment in budget 2011.

The support of the government through programs like the agricultural innovation initiative will help Alberta grow.

This budget also provides \$24 million to extend the initiative to control diseases in the hog industry. This new funding will enable the Canadian Swine Health Board to complete its initiatives directed at biosecurity standards and best managerial practices to protect producers' barns. Red Deer is home to western Canada's largest pork

packer. Therefore, this is welcomed news for the entire value chain that is relying on the completion of this strategy.

The Budget

While we recognize the significant work of our agriculture producers, our government also recognizes the significant contribution that seniors have made to our country. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on the support network already in place for seniors by adding several new measures. This budget will enhance the guaranteed income supplement by providing eligible low income seniors with additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. I often hear from low income seniors in my riding who have trouble making ends meet. This increase to the guaranteed income supplement will be welcomed help. Our seniors deserve a secure and dignified retirement that reflects the contributions that they have made.

We are also ensuring that community level supports exist so that seniors have the opportunity to participate in social activities. The new horizons seniors program is helping seniors be together and active in their communities. In 2010, the government invested an extra \$10 million in this initiative to assist community level programs.

Budget 2011 provides another \$10 million over two years to support the new horizons program. This program has assisted in Red Deer with such things as equipment replacement at the Golden Circle, which is a popular gathering place for central Alberta seniors, and with women's wellness events administered by the Red Deer Family Service Bureau.

The new horizons seniors program raises the quality of life in communities through active living and participation in social activities. It is a responsible way to respond to social needs in our communities.

The next phase of our Conservative government's plan keeps taxes low to promote jobs and economic growth while supporting families and seniors. The previous actions that this government took during the recession kept Canada's economy strong and supported Canadian jobs.

What needs to be done now is to stay the course. I encourage all members to support this budget so Canada can continue to move forward.

• (1510)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague and, like him, I represent a very large rural region. What I find absolutely staggering in this budget is the complete lack of a plan for a digital strategy for rural and northern Canada, specifically the need for a broadband strategy.

The Budget

We hear the government talk about a digital strategy but it is all talk because the money that is needed is not there.

I will give an example. In Australia, under a labour government I might point out, there is the most comprehensive broadband strategy infrastructure plan to ensure that every rural part of Australia is up to speed. The government talks about broadband but its numbers are at 1.5 megabytes. Rural Australia will be 100 times faster than what rural northern Ontario and rural Albertans can have.

Why has the government ignored the broadband needs of rural Canada?

● (1515)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the broadband industry has been going through a lot of changes. I think we are looking forward to a lot more in the communities in the future.

I was with the northern development committee last year and we had the opportunity to meet with many different groups and organizations in the territories. They have seen a lot of different action. I believe we will have great co-operation between the provinces, the territories and the federal government in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is with regard to the whole issue of priorities in government expenditures.

At a time when our seniors are looking to government to demonstrate leadership, to demonstrate it cares about the plight of our seniors and the need to increase their income, the government has seen fit to only give something like \$1.67 a day.

Given the wealth that our country has and given the expectations that Canadians have in the sense that the federal government should be a compassionate government that provides for our seniors, why has the Government of Canada only given our seniors \$1.67 a day in terms of that increase?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, that is one component of the budget, which is a very significant part, but there are many other things that we are doing.

As I mentioned in my speech, when I talked to seniors, they looked at the fact that we had made that commitment. They were also concerned about the fact that it would have been passed already if there had not been an election at that point in time. Nevertheless, we do have the opportunity right now to continue with it. There have been so many other things that have happened as well.

I mentioned the new horizons program for seniors. We have also talked about targeted initiatives for older workers. We are extending the eco-energy retrofit program to help seniors as well.

The tax measures that are already in place have taken over 85,000 seniors off the tax roll, which is very significant.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has told us that jobs and growth are the number one priority for our government. We also know that small businesses are a force in the Canadian economy and its continued recovery. I believe three out of every four jobs are created by small business. The administration and paperwork requirements that these businesses go through are often a burden that restricts productivity and growth.

Could the hon. member please explain to us how cutting red tape will benefit his constituents?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, allowing small businesses to grow and prosper will help the economic recovery that the government has strategically and successfully led Canada through this far.

In my riding of Red Deer, entrepreneurs know the value of time, especially time that is wasted. The red tape that slows down businesses, slows down our economy.

In January 2011, the Red Tape Reduction Commission was created. The commission will identify where the business irritants stem from in the federal regulations and will find effective solutions to enable small and medium-sized businesses to grow.

I will give an example of a small business. We have a 23-year-old entrepreneur who probably has 12 to 15 employees. She has done a great job putting all of this together. She will be able to use this particular initiative. I am extremely impressed with our ability to help people in this regard.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I speak to the budget, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. Your family is proud of you and your colleagues are proud of you.

I also want to take this opportunity, as it is my first time to speak in the 41st Parliament, to thank the fine people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for their overwhelming trust and support given to me in the recent election.

I also congratulate the Minister of Finance, the hon. member for Whitby—Oshawa, on his sixth budget and the second this year. As promised, this government is continuing to focus on the economy. It is our top priority.

Canada's economic recovery is still fragile so we are focusing on creating jobs and economic growth for Canadians. The Speech from the Throne and yesterday's presentation of the 2011 budget outline priorities that are important to residents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and certainly all Canadians.

Today I want to discuss what this government is doing for our economy, families, farmers, our seniors, students, our businesses, large and small, our small towns and rural communities, and the actions our government will take to return to balanced budgets in the years ahead.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will invest in the key drivers of economic growth: innovation, investment, education and training. Canada's economic performance during the recovery stands out among advanced countries having posted the strongest employment growth in the G7 since mid-2009.

We are proud to say that we have more Canadians working now than before the recession. Jobs and economic growth are important to the residents of my riding and certainly to all Canadians. Canada's economic action plan is working. This government's investments have been effective in shielding hard-working Canadians from the worst of the global recession. Over 28,500 projects have been completed or are under way, which have generated new jobs in small communities right across Canada. These projects have contributed to the creation of approximately 540,000 jobs since July 2009.

However, this government recognizes that our economic recovery remains fragile and, for this reason, we are continuing to take measures that will foster long-term growth and support job creation.

I spent 12.5 years in municipal government. I worked hard, along with other colleagues at the time, to have the gas tax funding refunded to municipalities. In 2008, our government, a Conservative government, announced that the gas tax fund would become a permanent measure. This measure will provide greater certainty to the provinces, territories and municipalities. The budget proposes a permanent annual investment of \$2 million in municipal infrastructure through the gas tax fund, which will be welcome news to municipalities in my riding.

Budget 2011 also invests more than \$300 million per year to enhance the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, for seniors. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will improve the financial security of seniors in my riding and of the more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

This government also recognizes the personal sacrifice that many Canadians make to care for their family members with serious illnesses such as MS or ALS. We are proposing a family caregivers tax credit, which will provide a 15% non-refundable credit on an amount of \$2,000. This will help many families in my riding and an estimated 500,000 caregivers across the country.

My sister suffers from MS so I understand the toll that this disease and other diseases can have on victims and on their families. This tax credit can help to ease the financial burden of individuals who provide care for family members who are combating serious illnesses.

An issue that is currently impacting communities in my riding as well as other rural and remote communities is access to health care. Our government is committed to health care and to strengthening health care in underserved communities. To combat the shortage of doctors and nurses in these communities, the budget proposes to forgive a portion of the Canada student loans for new family doctors and nurses who practice in underserved rural and remote areas. This is good for my riding.

Starting in 2012-13, practising family doctors will be eligible for loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000 of their Canadian student loans and nurses will be eligible for loan forgiveness of \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

• (1520)

This government is also committed to enhancing federal financial assistance for students. We will provide financial support to college and university students through the Canada student loans program.

The Budget

In the 2009-10 academic year, more than 400,000 students benefited from over \$2.5 billion in federal student loan assistance, whether in the form of a loan or a grant. The 2011 budget proposes to enhance and expand the eligibility of part-time and full-time post-secondary students for Canada student loans, with an investment of over \$34 million a year once fully implemented.

This government has also pledged an additional \$37 million per year to the three federal granting councils that support research at Canada's universities, colleges, and research hospitals. We are also proposing to invest \$53 million over five years to support the creation of 10 new Canada Excellence Research Chairs.

Now, on to agriculture, the biggest business in my riding and certainly a major one in Canada's economy. One of our government's priorities is to continue to promote the long-term profitability and global competitiveness of the Canadian agricultural sector. We have announced a two-year, \$50 million agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and transfer and to increase the commercialization of agricultural innovations. This is on top of the present agricultural programs.

In early 2011, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food had the opportunity to travel across Canada during its biotech study. One key theme that was top of mind, which we heard everywhere we went from producers and industry stakeholders, was the importance of research to the competitiveness and profitability of Canadian farmers.

Another thing that I am very happy to see the budget is the abolition of the gun registry. This registry has been an anchor around farmers and law-abiding rural people all over this country for 16 years. Thanks to this government, it is going to disappear.

Our government also recognizes that small businesses are job creators and help stimulate our economy, which makes them a crucial part of economic recovery. A lot of people do not realize that small businesses employ more people collectively across this country than big business by far. For this reason, we have created the new hiring credit for small business, which will provide a temporary one-time credit of up to \$1,000 against any potential increases in 2011 EI premiums over those paid in 2010. This new credit will help over 525,000 employers pay the cost of additional hiring.

My riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound relies very heavily on the services of volunteer firefighters. Our government is proud of the nearly 85,000 volunteer firefighters who keep our communities safe. This budget introduces a 15% non-refundable volunteer firefighters tax credit on an amount of \$3,000.

The Budget

This government is also committed to strengthening integrity and accountability in government and political activity. We have announced the phase-out of quarterly allowances for political parties. This government will introduce legislation to gradually reduce the \$2.04 per year per vote subsidy in 51¢ increments, starting on April 1, 2012, until it is completely eliminated by 2015-16. The hard-working taxpayers in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, in the Yukon, in the Maritimes, or in any other community across Canada should not have to fund political parties they do not support, such as the Bloc Québécois, which wants to pull our great country apart. All Canadians have the opportunity to provide financial contributions to the parties they believe in and support. That is what they should be doing.

This government has a plan in place to balance budgets one year ahead of schedule without raising taxes or cutting transfer payments. Our plan for returning to balanced budgets includes winding down the economic action plan's stimulus as the economy recovers, targeted measures to restrain growth in direct program spending, and a comprehensive review of government administrative functions and overhead costs.

The long and short of it is that this budget is a sensible, realistic budget, and I urge all my colleagues in the House to support it. I look forward to taking some questions.

• (1525)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Vancouver Kingsway for once more giving me the privilege of representing them in the House.

During the last election, many people in Vancouver Kingsway, and I think across Vancouver, the Lower Mainland and across the country, told candidates of every party that they were having great difficulty finding affordable housing. Many parents are also telling politicians of all parties that they are having difficulty obtaining accessible, affordable quality child care.

I wonder if my hon. friend would comment and explain why the budget does not really do anything to address those two major concerns by providing affordable housing and affordable child care for the millions of Canadians who need those services.

• (1530)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my colleague back to the House.

On the issue of child care, three or four years ago this government brought in the very first child tax credit to allow parents the choice of who would look after their children, not to have the government look after them but to help parents look after them and give them a choice. That credit is still there and I regularly receive comments from young parents on it. It is certainly a strong program and it will continue. I have two young granddaughters who are in day care, as my son and his wife both work. I understand the issue.

On the housing issue, we talk about the price of affordable housing and so on. When a government makes the kind of tax cuts it has done for seniors and others, that goes a long way to addressing the problem the member referred to.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the member talked about was the importance of research. As the critic for industry, science and technology, I frequently have the pleasure of meeting with university presidents. The single most important issue they keep bringing up is the need to boost the indirect costs of research program in our universities. They were asking for it to be doubled, and we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars.

I noticed that in the budget there is an increase of \$10 million for all the universities in this country. We are talking about over 80 universities. If we divided that up equally, it would be about \$120,000 per university for all researchers to take care of their indirect costs, which are very appreciable.

Does the hon. member really think that \$10 million is anything more than just a microscopic sprinkling of pixie dust on this important program?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, it is nice to be congratulated for increasing the money for research. I am glad that the member noticed it in the budget. It is something that this government recognizes, as I said. When I was a member of the agriculture committee in the last Parliament and travelled across the country with the committee for its biotech study last spring, that was a common theme that we heard from every university and every stakeholder.

I thank the member for recognizing that this government has increased the money for research.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech, and I am surprised that he did not talk about the \$4 billion in cuts announced in the budget. We have not heard any details on that. Public servants and social and community groups are worried.

Does he not think that giving tax breaks worth over \$1.5 billion to oil companies and large corporations could prevent the \$4 billion in cuts? Cuts could also be made in the area of defence, where the government plans to spend over \$48 billion over the next 20 years.

[English]

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank with all due respect our senior member in the House of Commons, our dean, for the great job he did in the chair during the election of the Speaker the other day.

Many tough decisions on cuts have to be made in times like these. We have done that and have pledged not to make cuts to health care like the previous government did or cut transfers to the provinces. We have to be prudent. It is that time, and we will be prudent.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for York West.

The Budget

I would like to begin by thanking the people of Kings—Hants, who have given me the honour and privilege of serving as their member of Parliament in this House six times now. Fourteen years ago, June 2, 1997, was my first election. I want to thank them. They have stood by me and I have stood up for them. It is a wonderful constituency and there are wonderful families and friends in Kings—Hants whom I am very proud to serve.

The Conservatives have always blamed their lack of big ideas and plans and vision on having a minority government and the short-term focus of minority parliaments. Therefore, one would have expected with this budget, in their first majority government, the Conservatives to seize the opportunity to provide Canadians with a long-term vision, with some real plans for the future to build a better Canada and to stop focusing on this week's polls and instead focus on the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Those Canadians who were expecting the Conservatives to seize the moment and the opportunity provided to them by a majority parliament to actually offer long-term vision and bold ideas to build a better Canada will be very disappointed by this budget, which lacks long-term ideas, bold vision and clear direction for the Canadian economy.

I would like to speak first about the whole debt and deficit issue. The Conservatives talk a good line on this but they really have not delivered. It is critically important that we remember that they inherited a \$13 billion surplus. They spent through that surplus, they wracked up record deficits and in fact put Canada into deficit even before the economic downturn in the fall of 2008. They are on track, they say. Yes, they are on track to add \$150 billion to \$200 billion to Canada's national debt. They have no credibility when it comes to controlling spending or deficit reduction. They have missed every deficit target they have set. There is no plan.

In fact, if we look at the previous Conservative government's record, it is one of waste and misuse of tax dollars. The Conservatives increased government advertising by 300%, and increased spending on ministers' personal offices by 14% just last year. Now, with a majority government, what was the Conservatives' first attempt at fiscal restraint? It was to expand their cabinet. The Conservatives are not leading by example.

They have now named an expenditure review committee of cabinet. In fact, it is to replace the expenditure review committee of cabinet the Conservatives eliminated when they formed government. The Liberal government of Paul Martin had an expenditure review committee; we respected every hard-earned tax dollar in that expenditure review committee during a time of surplus. The Conservatives got rid of that committee while in deficit and they went on to add hundreds of billions of dollars to Canada's national debt.

The Conservatives talk about how well Canada is doing in terms of our debt as a per cent of GDP compared to other countries. The reality is that most of the time they are comparing Canada to other countries. They are ignoring the fact that in Canada, with our system of government and provincial governments, if we combine federal and provincial debt as a per cent of GDP and if we recognize that there is only one taxpayer who is responsible for all of the debts of the provincial and federal governments, and if we consider gross

debt numbers and compare them to other countries' gross debt numbers, we get a very different picture.

Our gross debt in Canada, federal and provincial debt combined, is 81.7% of GDP. That is actually almost as bad as the U.S. gross debt figure at 84% of GDP. It is worse than the U.K.'s gross debt figure at 77% and worse than Germany's gross debt figure at 75%.

Thus, I think that part of our dealing with these issues responsibly is actually telling Canadians the truth and accepting that Canadians, when given the truth, will accept measures to restrain and control government spending.

• (1535)

One of the biggest reasons we have had better recovery numbers than some other economies has been our natural resource wealth, oil and gas and mineral wealth. We are blessed with natural resource wealth in Canada. As countries like China, India and other emerging economies have an insatiable appetite and need for natural resources and energy, Canada is in a great position to provide it, not because the Conservatives put the oil and gas under the ground off the Atlantic coast, everyone knows that was Danny Williams, but because we are fortunate.

The reality is the benefit we have from all of the natural resource wealth is a bit of a double-edged sword because it is creating two economies in Canada: a have economy for the provinces and people in the oil and gas and mineral sectors and a have not for the provinces, families and sectors that are not part of the oil and gas and mineral boom. It is creating a balkanized Canadian economy and further dividing the haves and have nots in Canada.

As gas prices rise, so does our dollar. As commodity prices go up, our dollar goes up and value-added manufacturing jobs vanish. They are crowded out. In my part of Nova Scotia, Hants County, Kings County and Annapolis County, since the fall of 2008, 10,700 full-time jobs have been lost, mainly in manufacturing.

Our unemployment rate has gone from 5% to 12.5%. Companies like Canard Poultry, Eastern Protein and Fundy Gypsum have gone out of business. There have been massive layoffs. At the very time families are faced with the challenge of losing full-time jobs and replacing them with part-time jobs, gas prices are going up and it is harder to fill their car tanks, heating oil prices are going up and it is harder to heat their homes and the cost of living and food costs are going up and it is harder to feed their families.

The Budget

The reality we face as a country now is that Canada has what some refer to as the Dutch disease, because Holland went through a similar challenge: a rising dollar fuelled by growth in the demand for our natural resources, but crowding out manufacturing jobs and driving up the cost of living. There is nothing in the budget that addresses this massive challenge, this bifurcation of the Canadian economy, this gap between rich and poor, this gap between have and have not regions that is a reality for our country and Canadian families.

Have not provinces are facing rising health care costs, an aging population and a diminished tax base because young people are going to the have provinces as they need to work. At the same time, families and provinces are facing increased levels of debt load. The situation is actually getting worse.

In Nova Scotia, the provincial government is now slashing funding for public education. What does that do? It creates less of an incentive for young families to stay in Nova Scotia and reduces its capacity to grow and ensure that young families and people are given the skills and education they require to compete and succeed globally.

The gap between rich and poor and the economic growth focused only on petroleum and mineral wealth is leading to a greater inequality of opportunity in Canada. There is nothing more fundamental as a Canadian value than equality of opportunity. It is time the Conservative government start to work with the provinces to address some of these issues and challenges.

The premiers know they have a challenge. They know we are coming up to a 2014 deadline for a health care accord. The last time that accord was negotiated was in 2004. I was part of the Martin government then and the country was in surplus. We were able to provide \$40 billion to the provinces, the largest single investment in health care from a federal government in Canadian history.

• (1540)

We are not in surplus now and neither are the provinces. We need to be working with the provinces to address aging demographics, the health care costs that are rising and the gap between rich and poor regions in our country. This what the government ought to be doing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I remember 2008 when the government came in at the beginning of the greatest economic collapse since the depression. We heard Mr. Magoo say, as he was walking on the ledge of the building, that there was not a problem, that the world was great and that we were not in a recession. We knew we were in a structural recession. The only plan of the Conservatives was they were going to cut political subsidies for political parties. That was it. They swore we would not spend a dime on the recession. Then within three months they had blown \$50 billion. It was staggering.

When I see this budget, I see the Mr. Magoo factor once again walking out on the ledge saying that the Conservatives can cut \$4 billion and not a single service is going to be hurt and that they can get all this new money based on an economy that is tanking around the world.

Does my colleague feel that it is kind of like déjà vu when the only thing the Conservatives have offered in this budget is to once

again attack political party subsidies? There is no plan for dealing with the ongoing economic crisis and they are not being honest with the Canadian people about from where the cuts will come.

We know the Conservatives are going to put the boots to the public service as soon as the media stops paying attention to the House.

• (1545)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, in fact it is not just déjà vu, it is déjà vu all over again. I remember in the fall of 2008 when the Minister of Finance presented the budget. In order to balance his budget, theoretically at least, with \$100 million rounding error of a surplus, he pledged to sell \$11 billion worth of government assets.

We kept asking, day after day, for a list of those assets. In fact, there was no list of those assets because there was no plan to sell assets. That was never realized because the Conservatives never intended to do it in the first place. This is very similar to their expenditure review process. Once again, there is no plan.

What I am concerned about, and I expect the hon. member shares my concern, is the Conservative cuts will be ideological. They will not be based on evidence. They will be cutting programs they do not like for ideological reasons in order to preserve ones they like. And they will not be cutting the fat, but they could cut into bone and sinew and muscle with regard to a good government's capacity to help real Canadians.

I have one last point. The government could be working with provincial governments on a shared service agenda to work together to cut the administrative costs of government. That would be part of a good, constructive federal-provincial discussion on how they could work together to cut the cost of government and to respect hard-earned tax dollars from Canadians.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from Kings—Hants focus on long-term plans. The opposition also talked about when we actually did that. Earlier on there was criticism of how to focus on the long term and reach out for two years or three years because we could not do that.

I want to make a comment about ideological cuts, the ones that they do not like. I remember when there were some recessions, nothing like the global recession we have had. How the party the member is a part of balanced the budget was to cut transfers to the provinces on health care. It cut the transfers to the provinces on education. It decimated our Canadian Forces to where it was an embarrassment to walk down the street in uniform. We will not do that.

How does the member consider that as being an ideological comment with regard to cutting and being responsible in our budget?

The Budget

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, my colleague knows the Liberal government inherited a record deficit in Canada of \$42 billion at that time, which held the record until the Conservative government provided Canada with its latest record deficit of \$56 billion, and it had to reign in spending. It had to control spending and make difficult choices in order to get Canada back on track.

There is a reason why the IMF and the international financial community are saying that a government of a country that is having fiscal challenges today that wants the recipe to fix those challenges should look to what the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin did in Canada during the 1990s. In fact, that is what think tanks within Canada are telling the current government.

Beyond that, when we look at making decisions based on evidence as opposed to ideology, we know that the crime agenda the government is pursuing does not work. We have seen it fail in the U.S.—

● (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for York West.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak today. It is my first opportunity since the May 2 election.

Needless to say, I want to thank the wonderful residents of York West. This is my sixth federal election. They were there for me throughout the election, as they had been in previous ones. I am very grateful for the trust and the confidence they have in me and I am thrilled that I represent such a wonderful riding.

It has been often talked about in a negative form, the Jane-Finch corridor. I would not represent any other riding in our country. My riding has all those wonderful, caring people and I am thrilled to represent them.

I also thank my family, my grandchildren and children and my husband Sam for their complete commitment for the 22 years I have had in public office. They are always there and will continue to be there. With the help of my residents, I intend to be there for as long as they want me to be. I look forward to that.

I have a wonderful staff. All of us here know how important our staff is. I thank Greg, Sam, Sonia, Antoinette and others, and my riding president. I thank them all for their continued commitment.

I am pleased to be back. We are in an interesting spot with lots of opportunities for the future and to grow and we are very excited about all of that.

Yesterday the government presented its do-over budget to the House and indeed to all Canadians. There is not much different from what was there, other than taking a shot at political subsidies, but so be it. That is not a problem. We will overcome that. We are very good at dealing with issues that are tough to deal with and finding solutions to all of that.

I say a do-over budget because as we know, this budget is the second such document that the government has presented in just three short months. While this type of second chance typically does not happen, these are clearly extraordinary times.

The government presented its first budget in March and then, as a result of being found in contempt of Parliament, all of us spent the following weeks speaking directly to Canadians. However, at least in theory, candidates were supposed to be asking constituents for their input on the direction of the country, both fiscally and socially.

In my riding of York West, the message I was given was very clear. It is about jobs, more jobs, full-time jobs, not part-time jobs, pension reform and seniors issues. We have heard a lot today about seniors. We heard a lot through the recent campaign. I hope we will hear more in the oncoming years about the importance of supporting our seniors and their quality of life.

Settlement funding for new immigrants is another issue that is very significant in the riding of York West. It happens to be home to many newcomers, most of whom we get to know through our office. The settlement funding cuts have really hurt their ability to settle sooner so they can get themselves into the marketplace, hone up on the language skills and things that are necessary to get the jobs they want, to pay taxes to help our country grow and also to grow with their families. The lack of settlement funding for many of them has clearly hampered those opportunities.

Those were the issues identified in my riding when I was knocking on doors.

However, I would suggest that most Canadians agree the Conservative budget presented in March 2011 was a budget that again failed to address some of the key issues in any real, substantive way.

Again, the Conservatives resorted to their traditional position, first adopted by the former U.S. president, the late Ronald Reagan, of cut taxes, reduce programs, throw it all up in the air and let everything sort itself out. Clearly, it is not the way the Liberals think we should be running the country.

Budget 2011 was, by all accounts, a budget that focused attention on the wealthiest corporations and those individuals on the upper end of the income scale. While I strongly support measures designed to support those outside of the low end of the income scale, I also believe we can and must do more to address poverty and isolation in Canada. Leaving the poorest Canadians to get sorted out by the markets or by large corporations just does not seem right to me. People who need help have every right to expect that their government will stand by them and with them.

● (1555)

The government had an opportunity to take the feedback given during the recent campaign and then apply it to Canada's fiscal course. By implementing and sustaining measures to address the concerns of new Canadians and older Canadians alike, Canada could again boast an inclusive and compassionate approach to problem-solving. The opportunity to end politics of division was very real and I believe it is a missed opportunity.

The Budget

Contrarily, the second Conservative budget included a range of items, everything from tax changes for large corporations to phantom and undefined predictions of impending government program cuts. It could be said that the budget was more newsworthy for what it failed to include.

Real pension reform is a very serious issue facing this country. Many of the seniors we were talking about earlier today did not have a vehicle that would have allowed them to save in a successful way for their retirement days, or they did not have the income to put away because they were new immigrants to Canada and were finding their way. They may end up in poverty once they become 65 if we do not change our retirement system, and we need to start that plan today, not tomorrow.

Affordable housing is a big issue in Canada, as any of us who have been out there in our ridings would have heard in talking with seniors and those suffering from mental illness who have ended up living on the street. That is not the kind of Canada any of us in the House want regardless of what side of the House we sit on. I believe we need to work collaboratively to find solutions for these very important issues.

On refundable tax credits for home care and other areas where people need help, having a non-taxable refundable tax credit would not help as we move forward. For those people we are very much trying to help who do not have any taxes to pay, how would they would get a refund?

Families struggling to make ends meet need help. There are many people that I have met who want to stay in school, but they need child care in order to do that. They want to join the workforce and achieve the same dream that everybody else wants to achieve, but they need child care in order to go to school and they need help with tuition.

That is everybody's dream. I do not believe people want to sit at home and collect a cheque. We need to give them a hand up so they can achieve their goals. However, it does not seem to make any sense to the current government when it comes to giving a hand up rather than just a hand out.

When we do the math on assistance for seniors, as we have talked about in this budget, we find that the \$1.67 is not going to everybody but only to seniors who qualify; the poorest of the poor. It is the equivalent of a good cup of coffee every day.

When it came to pension reform, we put forward proposals for a supplemental Canada pension plan, a revamp of the cost of living calculations used for pensions, and a stranded pension agency, to name a few of our ideas. These were measures that could have made a real difference. Again, I would ask the government to set aside its partisan focus in favour of really helping seniors, really helping Canadians in our country.

The government spent more than \$1 billion on things such as fake lakes, snacks, hand lotion and glow sticks. Just think what we could have done with that \$1 billion for the many who are struggling in our country. CARP tells us that 200,000 seniors are still living in poverty. That \$1 billion could have been put into the hands of seniors to get them out of poverty. We would then not have to say

that we still have Canadians, specifically seniors, living in poverty in this country.

This debate is not just about the budget, it is about our collective priorities for the future. Aside from pensions, Canada faces challenges in areas such as integration of new Canadians, as I referred to earlier. Prior to the election, the government summarily slashed funding for the settlement service agencies throughout Canada, a move which hobbled many community service groups that provide essential roles in countless communities.

In York West, groups such as the Delta Family Resource Centre, Northwood Neighbourhood Services and the Afghan Association of Ontario, just to point out a few, have for years provided language, employment and cultural support to thousands of new Canadians. Because of the government's short-sightedness, these groups have been dealt a blow from which they will never recover. As a result, thousands of new Canadians will be left adrift without the support they need to become productive and prosperous members of society.

Budget 2011 talks about helmets to hardhats, but there is no money. It talks about helping with foreign credentials, but there is no money attached to it. Rhetoric is easy, but we need the actual vision to make a difference.

• (1600)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, as was mentioned earlier, we know that the Liberals always have great intentions. They always make a lot of promises but when they are in government they actually never accomplish anything. What they do is live off all of the hard work that has been done before them.

In the nineties they hoisted all their cuts on the provinces and they did all the heavy lifting. Thanks to the provinces we were able to balance the budget. It was also because of the hard work of a Conservative government in the eighties, which brought in the GST and free trade, that the Liberals were able to accomplish many of the balanced budgets that they like to talk about.

I want to ask the member about settlement funding. I come from a part of the country where thousands of immigrants are settling. We have moved immigration settlement funding to where immigrants are settling and we have actually increased settlement funding.

I am wondering if the hon. member is trying to suggest to the new immigrants who are coming to my riding that they are not as valuable as immigrants in other parts of the country and that they should receive less funding for settlement as they would in Toronto.

Hon. Judy Sgro: That is another insult, Madam Speaker. That is simply the same issue that the Conservatives are famous for and that is dividing communities, one against the other. I am very glad that the member has new Canadians moving into his riding and that he has extra support money, but it does not mean you have to take it away from my riding in order to give it to your riding.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to direct her comments through the Chair.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, it is all about building. It is not about taking from one side and giving it to the other or vice versa.

I do appreciate the fact that we are being very strict in the House today and that is a good sign for the future.

I would remind the hon. member that when we were in office in 1993 and had to make those cuts, we had a \$43 billion deficit as a result of the previous Conservative government. The provinces were all awash in money and doing very well. We made the cuts that we needed to make in those years and brought in very well-balanced budgets. We also left a \$13 billion surplus on the table for the Conservative government that has now squandered it.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising some important points around poverty. She specifically referenced seniors poverty.

I want to come back to a report in 2007 from the National Council on Welfare wherein it talked about the fact that in 2007 Canada had no long-term vision, no plan, no one accountable for carrying out the plan, no resources in sight, and no accepted measures of results on an anti-poverty strategy. One of its recommendations was that the government take on a national anti-poverty strategy with a long-term vision and measurable targets and timelines.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that here we are in 2011 and Canada still does not have a national anti-poverty strategy.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, if we have not had it up until now, I doubt that we are ever going to see it.

I talked earlier about having a long-term vision and that takes a government that is committed to making a serious difference and eliminating poverty in this country. While we are investing in our businesses and small businesses to make sure they are successful and all of that, we have to invest in the people of the country at the same time.

I recall a young woman I met who was in her second year of college. She was hoping she would have the money to complete it, so that she could join the workforce like everybody else. She said the one thing that she wanted to do was get up in the morning and get dressed, and go to work like everyone else. That was her degree of success.

In order for that to happen for many people, whether they are new immigrants or whether they are suffering from mental illness or a lack of opportunity and encouragement, we need to invest in the people of this country in order for our production to increase.

● (1605)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I want to ask a clarification question.

The member said that the provinces were awash in cash in the nineties when there were unilateral cuts. I just want to remind the hon. member that the current leader of the Liberal Party was the departing NDP premier of the province of Ontario when it was awash in a \$11 billion deficit. The province was spending about \$1 million more an hour than it was taking in.

The Budget

I am wondering if that is the type of leadership that we can expect over the next four and a half years from the Liberal Party. Is that what those members mean when they talk about the provinces being awash in revenue and that is why the Liberals unilaterally cut \$25 billion from health care?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, they clearly were not as well off as some of the other provinces. I am really pleased with the leadership of our Liberal Party. I look forward to our party coming forward with very fiscally responsible and socially progressive plans for the future. I am very proud of the leader that we have.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin today by thanking the citizens of Kitchener—Conestoga for returning me to Parliament to work on their behalf and by congratulating all members of this House on their election to this chamber.

A special word of thanks to all of those who helped me return to Parliament, my family, children, grandchildren, my campaign team, John, Linda, David, Scott, Beverly, Doug, and many others, and also my EDA board, my president especially.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of hundreds of volunteers who made it possible for me to enjoy this great honour and privilege of serving here in the House of Commons.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the ongoing work between the campaigns of my constituency and Ottawa staff. Certainly, on a day-to-day basis the issues they deal with make it possible for me to represent the area and to address many of the issues that the constituents bring to my office for help.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

I rise today to speak in support of budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I am pleased to note that this budget is very similar to that one tabled on March 22, a budget which the opposition parties chose not to debate in favour of forcing an unnecessary election.

The citizens expressed their contempt with the opposition action through their ballots. I return to this House not only as part of a majority government but with the strongest mandate I have ever enjoyed in three elections. I understand where the voters were coming from. I understand what motivated them. They told me at the doors. I met thousands of them over the five weeks of the campaign.

Canadians are concerned about the economy. They worry about their jobs, the ability of their children to find that first job while saddled with debt, the ability of their parents to access the health care they need, and where their mortgage or rent payment will come from.

When the voters were given a choice between a low tax plan for jobs and growth on one hand and continuing the political games of the opposition on the other, Canadians voted for the leadership that brought them seven straight quarters of economic growth, more than half a million net new jobs since July 2009, and the strongest fiscal position among the world's advanced economies.

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Members on this side of the House ran on our government's record. We ran on the budget that we proposed on March 22. That budget promised to support job creation through a variety of means, all contained in this budget as well, extending the capital cost allowance, improving the programs that help employers return their skilled workers, renewing programs to help the unemployed, making it easier for small businesses to hire and grow, and support for young entrepreneurs.

In Waterloo region, we heard praise for the March 22 budget. Feridun Hamdullahpur, president of the University of Waterloo, noted that our future prosperity was dependent on innovation and research. Our universities will be on the edge of that, thanks to that same budget.

That budget promised to support families and communities, as does this budget tabled yesterday, through an enhancement of the GIS, tax credits to support children's art programs, volunteer firefighters and family caregivers.

The support for volunteer firefighters is crucial. Many times these are the frontline responders to the emergencies that occur in our communities. I believe they deserve the honour and respect of all of us here in this House and indeed of all Canadians.

There was also support for family caregivers, so that families like the Simpson family in the region of Waterloo, whose son suffers from cerebral palsy and will require care for his entire life, can make ends meet more easily.

When the opposition rejected its chance to debate that budget in March, it missed an opportunity, but thanks to the wisdom of Canadians, it has been given a second chance to offer criticism and amendments, and to adopt a budget that will see Canada maintain its economic leadership on the world stage.

Before I move to the substance of why I believe what is contained in this budget is the best possible course for Canada's economy, I would like to digress for just a moment to discuss what was not contained in this budget and nor was it contained in the throne speech which we heard last week.

• (1610)

As I mentioned, this most recent campaign was my third election. Through each of these campaigns, honourable opponents from some other parties told the voters there was a reason to be afraid of the Conservative Party and afraid of a Conservative majority. My constituents were told most recently that a Conservative majority would veer from the good governance and prudent stewardship we have offered Canadians to instead pursue some secret agenda.

Through three campaigns now, our party has defended itself from similar charges, charges that if we were given a majority, Canada and Canadians would be somehow harmed by nefarious actions our party would undertake. These were the accusations.

A stable, national Conservative majority government now governs this great country, but contrary to the predictions of the doomsayers, this government is delivering exactly what we said it would: a low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

Contrary to the fear-mongering to which Canadians were exposed, this budget demonstrates that this government will deliver on the promises it makes to Canadians. It will continue to focus on creating jobs now and fostering long-term growth going forward.

Canadians saw past the doomsaying. They saw one party fighting the recession and an official opposition fighting the recovery. Canadians saw where our focus was and returned us to government with a decisive majority. That previous official opposition, meanwhile, was found wanting by Canadians and was reduced to third-party status for the first time in its history. More than four in five Canadians voted against the Liberals' self-interested policies. More than 80% of Canadians voted against those policies.

Canadians now enjoy a majority government and a new loyal opposition as well. I extend my congratulations to the member for Toronto—Danforth on his party's success. While I disagree with many of the official opposition's policies, I do not question its belief that it acts in Canada's best interests rather than its own.

However, I digress.

On March 22 the proposed budget, just like the one tabled yesterday by our finance minister, provided a clear path to improving Canadians' lives today while positioning us for future stability and growth. Once again this budget is receiving praise in the Waterloo region. The Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce was particularly happy to see our government follow through on a hiring credit for small business to apply against their EI premiums.

The senior vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Dan Kelly, said, "We think that a lot of the provisions are going to help some small firms come out of the recession a bit better than they would have otherwise".

I know it is easy for us to dismiss the endorsement of business groups. However, I am sure members of the third party will recognize the names of former Liberal candidates who have also praised this budget. Carl Zehr, chair of the big cities caucuses of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and Berry Vrbanovic, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' new president, were both grateful that this government follows through on its commitments.

This government will make the gas transfer permanent. This government will work with municipalities on a long-term infrastructure program that Mayor Zehr notes includes traditional roads, bridges, water, infrastructure and other community needs.

It is true that the document tabled yesterday is not identical to the budget proposed on March 22. By forcing an election, the opposition parties gave this government an opportunity to seek new mandates. Our platform committed to end political subsidies.

Our region's daily paper, the *Waterloo Region Record*, today stated as clearly as possible the case for stopping this political welfare. It says, "The best argument for the change is that political parties should have no automatic right to financial backing from taxpayers".

Our platform also committed to returning Canada to surplus a year earlier than forecast. Deficit spending will end in 2014, and we are committed to finding the savings needed to achieve this goal.

We will not repeat the mistakes of the previous Liberal government. Canadians have turned the page and are ready to close the book on that party. We will protect transfer payments for health care and education, but we will return this country to surplus. According to the chamber of commerce, budget 2011 will secure the fiscal flexibility that is crucial to our long-term competitiveness.

Finally, I heard the leader of the third party refer to this budget somewhat derisively as a “dèjà-vu budget”. It may be that Canadians elected us to provide exactly that: a low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

• (1615)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have stood in the House, and it is a privilege that has been given to me by voters in Surrey North. I want to take this opportunity to thank the voters in Surrey North for the privilege of allowing me to be their voice in the House of Commons.

The government claims to want to deal with crime, yet again we see that the budget has made very minor commitments to areas in need of serious investment, crime prevention being one of the prime examples. The government has committed only a few million dollars, at a time when it is planning to spend billions of dollars on prisons. Victims' services have also felt these cuts by the government. Proposed spending will not go far enough.

Safety in our communities and across the country is a very serious concern, yet the government prefers to build mega prisons ahead of investing seriously in crime prevention programs for youth at risk and providing the proper resources for the RCMP to fight organized crime.

My question to the member is this. Please explain why the government continues to ignore the real concerns about crime and gang violence in our communities and continues to cut programs for victims and prevention while spending billions of dollars on prisons.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on being elected to the House. I know he will immensely enjoy representing his riding.

I want to point out that the Conservative government believes we need a balanced approach to crime prevention. We agree with, and have supported enthusiastically, many of the crime prevention programs. We have invested heavily in the anti-drug strategy and many other crime prevention programs. I personally have worked with groups in my riding that are active and successful in crime prevention programs.

However, we cannot simply put everything into that arm, the prevention program, without recognizing that we also need to protect victims. When a person who has committed a criminal offence is kept in prison long enough to be rehabilitated in order to protect those in the community, it is important that we support those kinds of initiatives as well.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have appreciated the discourse so far. However, I have to ask a very simple and straightforward question. Is there a

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certain satisfaction that the member and the government get in knowing that they are restricting any increase to the guaranteed income supplement benefits for seniors who make between \$4,000 and \$16,000?

There is something that needs to be made clear. It was made clear during the election campaign in my riding, but not necessarily across the entire country. It is that the current GIS proposal is not for a universal increase for all current GIS recipients, for all seniors who live on annual incomes of \$16,000 or less; the current proposal is strictly limited to those who make \$4,000 to \$7,000 or less. If seniors make \$4,000 a year outside of the OAS and GIS, they do not get the \$1.67; they get only a part of it. If they dare to make \$7,000 a year or more, they get none of it.

Is that a particularly pleasing policy that the government has introduced?

• (1620)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, all of us in the House would like to do far more for seniors, especially those who helped build this country and who gave us many of the benefits we currently enjoy. However, the reality is that there has been no adjustment to the GIS for something like 25 years. When the previous Liberal government was in power, it could have changed that. We have at least started to address some of the major shortfalls in this area.

Of course, we want to continue to expand on that. Many of the other initiatives we took in the past to support seniors were welcomed. When I go door to door, it is seniors who embrace the changes this Conservative government has initiated over its past terms. Pension income splitting has been a very popular way to help seniors address this issue.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is the first time I have stood in the House since the election, I want to thank all the residents of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for once again showing their support for me and returning me to Parliament.

I would also like to congratulate all members of the House and all my parliamentary colleagues on their re-elections, and also congratulate the campaign teams that worked so hard and diligently day and night to send them back here.

The democratic process is something we all value. People who put their names on a ballot, whether they are successful in the election or not, should all be congratulated for the effort they put forward.

I wish to encourage all parliamentarians to support this excellent budget, because I believe it is the right budget for Canada.

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One major priority that budget 2011 outlines is this government's commitment to lowering taxes. It was Winston Churchill who said, "We contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle". Canadians know this. They know we have to keep taxes low to grow the economy and to create jobs.

This budget does just that. It lowers taxes on job creators. It lowers taxes on families who enrol their children in artistic activities. It lowers taxes for volunteer firefighters. It lowers taxes for those who stay at home to care for an infirm parent or a disabled child. It also forgives student loans for doctors and nurses who settle in rural areas and provide needed health care service to those struggling in rural communities.

This is a budget that Winston Churchill would have been proud of. It keeps taxes low, invests in projects of national importance and maintains Canada's brand as one of the best places to live in the world. It supports families and communities so that all Canadians can enjoy a high standard of living and our communities can stay vibrant and safe. It invests in innovation and education and training. It promotes research in leading-edge technologies and provides Canadians with the opportunity and the incentives to acquire the skills needed for jobs in today's labour market. It also preserves our fiscal advantage in order to be able to invest in the priorities of Canadians and to keep Canada's economy growing strongly.

For families, it implements a new child arts tax credit worth \$500. That is money in the pocket for people to embrace when they engage their children in artistic and community activities such as Scouts, Cubs, Guides, drama, art. This is a big advantage to the youth of our nation and to their parents, who struggle to pay registration fees. It is something the federal government can do to provide them a little help.

There is a new family caregiver tax credit of \$2,000 for someone who stays home and gives up income to stay home with an infirm parent or a child who is struggling at school or who has a disability. We need to support these people who are willing to give up their employment to stay home and support a family member.

There is an enhanced medical expense tax credit. It is a \$10,000 tax credit for those families who desperately need it when they need it the most.

The budget will also allow full-time students to earn more money without affecting their student loan income. This is a good initiative for young people across this country.

For small business, it establishes a new hiring credit of \$1,000 in EI premium forgiveness. This will help over half a million small businesses defray the costs of hiring a new employee.

I also want to compliment the Minister of Finance in extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing, which is something that is very important in my community. This measure will support many manufacturers across Canada and will protect jobs.

There is an additional support of \$10 million for a work-sharing program. This was implemented by companies like Stanfield's in my hometown of Truro. It allows these companies to retain employees

by having the government cover part of the costs for those employees. It will allow industries that have periods of boom and boost, such as the textile industry, to retain employees during these tough times so that they will still be there when the market recovers.

There is help for farmers in rural areas of this country in terms of a \$50 million initiative for agricultural innovation. The budget provides for an increase in funds for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada by \$500 million annually and also establishes a \$1 billion investment in income stabilization programs for farmers.

In this budget, one of the most important planks for rural communities is the \$3,000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters. Our government recognizes that many rural communities across Canada are struggling to maintain their fire protection.

As some of these rural communities become smaller, it is becoming more difficult to attract volunteers to become firefighters in those communities. The issue is a negative spiral, because the fewer young people we have living in a community, the smaller the pool becomes for recruiting volunteers. In some communities, families are finding a challenge in obtaining insurance coverage, as the community does not have adequate fire coverage. If a young family looking for a place to raise children cannot get a homeowner's insurance policy because it cannot find adequate fire coverage, it is not going to move to that small rural community. This is having a devastating effect on many small communities across Canada.

• (1625)

We have 33 fire departments in my riding and, of those 33, 30 are staffed solely by volunteers. In fact, the riding is about 18,000 square kilometres and 98% of that geography is protected solely by volunteer firefighters. These are 600 volunteers who give up their time to train and risk their lives to protect the private property of others. We owe them a great debt.

This budget provides part of the solution by providing a \$3,000 tax cut credit, which will amount to roughly \$450 in the pockets of our volunteers to help reimburse the money that they invest out of their own pocket to support and protect their own communities. We have recognized that the government should not benefit financially from these volunteer activities and this will be a start to rebuild our fire protection in rural communities across this country.

We are investing in key areas like innovation and research at universities and colleges, which is why universities and colleges have spoken out strongly in support of this budget.

There is some other funding in terms of investment in research and development contained in its pages. Over \$50 million over the next five years will be provided to support the creation of 10 new Canada excellence research chairs such as the one at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in my riding.

There is an additional \$65 million for Genome Canada to continue its work. This was called for by all four political parties in this House before the election.

There is another \$60 million over three years to promote increased student enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy, one of the fastest growing segments of our economy.

I do not want to ignore seniors because they are an important part of this country. They have made sacrifices in previous generations to build Canada into the great country that it is now. For seniors, the budget puts an additional \$300 million into the GIS program, which will increase money for our lowest earning seniors, those who rely on their old age security and their GIS for their income. It will be a \$600 boost to single seniors who are living alone and an \$840 boost to qualifying seniors who live as couples. As the House knows, this was asked for by the parties and was strongly supported by our caucus. I ask all parties and all members in this House to support it when the budget vote comes up.

As well, I would like to recognize the extension of the eco-energy retrofit program which will allow Canadians, many of them seniors, to reduce their carbon footprint while allowing them to lower their own personal energy costs.

The budget also paves the way to a balanced budget. In addition to lowering taxes and making targeted investments, this budget will allow Canada to eliminate deficits in the future. Our government will complete a strategic view of government spending and find efficiencies so we can balance the budget one year earlier than announced.

Unlike the Liberal Party, which, in the mid-90s, devastated health and education transfers to the provinces, we will not choose that path. That path closed hospitals, closed schools and laid off teachers. We will choose a path to first look within the federal government for efficiencies, and we are committed to that.

In the time remaining in my speech, I will quote a number of organizations that have come out strongly in support of this budget.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce applauds this low tax budget. It stated:

Canada's low tax plan has created a healthy economic environment for business investment and we applaud the government for staying the course.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business also came out and endorsed this budget. It endorsed the EI hiring tax credit. It stated:

CFIB is extremely pleased to see its top budget priority - an EI Hiring Credit for Small Business - announced in the 2011 budget. As this budget forecasts rising EI premiums in each of the next three years, this credit will be a major help to small firms in growing their workforce.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons said that it was very happy to see the guaranteed income supplement increase. It said that it has been an issue that it has raised many times before and that it is finally something that is being addressed.

The Canadian Police Association said:

The inclusion by the Conservative government of a renewed investment in the Youth Gang Prevention Fund...will help provide police services across Canada with the tools and resources they need to target at-risk youth, and keep them away from the lure of organized crime.

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs said:

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) commends the federal government for reintroducing a \$3000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters in the

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2011 Federal Budget. We were delighted.... This measure will help with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters across the country, which will in turn help protect Canadians and our communities.

• (1630)

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations says:

...(CASA) is pleased to see positive reforms to the Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP), such as an increase to in-study work income exemption, improved access for part-time students—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. Perhaps he could complete his comments in response to questions.

The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the voters of Vaudreuil-Soulanges who sent me here to the House of Commons.

Today, I want to focus on the gas tax and infrastructure. We applaud the government for wanting to make the gas tax permanent. Nonetheless, our party feels that this tax should be indexed to inflation. I also want to ask the government what it is waiting for to address the \$123 billion infrastructure deficit. This is an urgent matter. Immediate action is required and this matter should be addressed in the budget.

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Madam Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this House. It is a place of democracy and, at times, we tend to argue and disagree on policy. However, we can all agree that Canada is one country, united from coast to coast to coast. Every member of the House can support that Canada is a united country and we will progress through the next century in that manner.

I totally agree that we must take some strong action to ensure that the infrastructure across this country continues to be rebuilt. That is why we had the economic action plan, which saw millions and millions of dollars placed into the hands of the municipalities, working on projects for provinces and municipalities so that we can have better infrastructure going into the future.

This is supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. In its release it stated:

We applaud the Government of Canada for committing in today's budget to develop a new long-term infrastructure plan in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), provinces, territories, and the private sector.

This government is working for municipalities. It is working for the provinces and the private sector to rebuild the infrastructure that is Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have spoken in the House. I first want to thank the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue for sending me here. It is a great honour for me to represent them.

In its budget, the government talks about a measure for paying off student loans for new nurses working in remote regions, but the entire health care system is suffering from the shortage of medical personnel.

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What does this government have to offer nurses who have been working for many years, holding the public health care system together, and who work extra, often mandatory 16-hour shifts and do not get to watch their children grow up?

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Madam Speaker, our government strongly supports the nurses, doctors and other health care professionals who work to deliver excellent health care across this country. We are committed to a strong public health care system in our provinces. We have shown that, not just by talking about it but by action.

We have met the commitments made in the Canada Health Act and the agreements made almost 10 years ago. We have indicated that we will continue the 6% escalator of health care funds that we will be sending to the provinces. We will help them work, develop and continue to deliver excellent health care across the country.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to home care services. The first thing that came across my mind in terms of home care services is the fact that there is a tax credit as opposed to a refundable tax credit.

Would the member not recognize that, by doing it in that fashion, the government is taking away the opportunity to have a break from those individuals who need it most? Many of those individuals are not eligible to take advantage of the program because it is a tax credit.

Does the member not see the merit in turning this into a refundable tax credit so that more people would be a part of the budget?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Madam Speaker, if we look back in the history of the Government of Canada, this is the first time the Government of Canada has introduced a tax credit to support people who stay home to take care of a parent or a child with a disability. These people are giving up incomes to remain at home and support their families. This is something we need to support, which is why the government has taken strong action. Of course we always want to do more. There are probably other programs that could have been put in place. However, I think all members of the House can recognize that this is a strong start and the tax credit is the first step in supporting them.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you right away that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

This is not the first but the second time that I have had the opportunity to rise in this House. However, it is the first time that I have really had the time to thank the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who honoured me by placing their trust in me on May 2. I want to assure them that I will work extremely hard in the next four years to defend their interests and to defend public services in Quebec and Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say hello to the students in grades four and six at La Mennais elementary school,

who had the good idea of inviting me to visit after my election win on May 2. I went to their school and they asked me questions for an hour and a half. Question period in the House of Commons is tough, but there are some real up-and-comers in our Quebec schools, because the students were really excellent.

I am very proud to represent the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. It is a great, densely populated, urban riding, where people are very involved in their community. There is a plethora of community groups and a very rich civil society. It is truly exemplary. I meet amazing people who give their all to help each other and those around them. I must recognize the work of people like those at the Corporation de développement communautaire de Rosemont and the Corporation de développement économique et communautaire de Rosemont, or CDEC, who do extraordinary things, as well as those at the Regroupement des tables de concertation de la Petite-Patrie, which is located in the western part of the riding.

There are great success stories in Rosemont thanks to people in the community who get involved, like those at Technopôle Angus and the Campus des technologies de la santé. These are the ways of the future, and I am very proud to think that I will be working with these people over the coming years.

Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is also a riding that faces major challenges, such as poverty. It is a riding where the average income is lower than that on the island of Montreal. This creates problems. People have trouble making ends meet. There are fathers and mothers who are working—they are working—and who still have to get food hampers to feed their families. This is unacceptable. This is a riding that has a high proportion of seniors. Seniors face isolation problems and poverty. The NDP will therefore put forward various proposals to urge the government to act. The riding also has a shortage of family doctors and nurses.

With regard to housing, 75% of people in Rosemont are renters. Affordable housing is thus very important to us. There are also public transit issues. We live in a city. We are therefore focusing on active transportation and biking or walking to get to work or to the grocery store. There are also environmental issues. I will come back to them. Finally, there is a wide variety of particularly vibrant cultures. It is wonderful to meet stimulating and enthusiastic people.

Yesterday, like all of my colleagues, I had the honour of listening to the government's budget presentation, which, I must say, contains some worthwhile measures. I would like to mention two here today. First of all, it promises compensation for Quebec for its sales tax harmonization, which the Leader of the Opposition and the House Leader of the Official Opposition have been calling for for some time. I consider this a victory and a real win, which can be attributed largely to the work of the NDP and the work of the NDP in Quebec. It was very interesting to hear that yesterday. The budget also renews the eco-energy program. This will allow people to renovate their homes to make them more energy efficient. That is a positive thing.

Overall, however, the rest of the budget is disappointing. The government did not hear the message sent by Canadians on May 2. I would remind the government that 60% of Canadians did not vote for its agenda and its policies. Yet it is stubbornly sticking to its doctrine.

This budget does not meet the basic needs of the people we represent and stand up for. For instance, the budget contains a series of tax credits. These tax credits can be beneficial for families like mine, but they do absolutely nothing for families that do not earn enough money to pay taxes. Therefore a huge segment of the population is being abandoned by the federal government simply because they are too poor and do not have the means to benefit from or claim these tax credits.

The throne speech and the budget were also very disappointing when it comes to fighting poverty.

• (1640)

I was blown away when I realized that the word “poverty” was nowhere to be found in the government’s throne speech. Furthermore, the proposed measures in the budget do absolutely nothing to address poverty. Nothing. It is not on their radar, while there are thousands and thousands of people living in poverty across Canada. This is a shame in a society as rich as ours.

The NDP has a vision. We do not let anyone fall through the cracks. We must all stand together.

The situation with seniors in our country is tragic. We must respect the contribution they have made. They left us something. They worked hard their entire lives so that their children would have a better society than the one they had. By and large, they were successful. Today, I get the impression that they are being abandoned, forgotten.

The government is injecting \$300 million into the guaranteed income supplement. That is a step in the right direction, but it is not nearly enough. Much more is needed. That is not even half of what we need to bring all of our seniors out of poverty. In the meantime, on January 1, 2012, major corporations, banks and oil companies will receive a \$2 billion gift. We do not think that is the direction our country should be headed in.

Access to family doctors is a very dramatic situation. In Rosemont, hundreds of families do not have a family doctor. What are they to do? They often go to the emergency department. They burden the emergency departments unnecessarily because they cannot make an appointment with a doctor who can look after their problem or that of their loved ones. I understand this situation, as I myself do not have a family doctor.

The government is not coming up with any plan to train new doctors and new nurses, but poll after poll suggests that access to a good public health care system is a priority for Quebecers and Canadians. This government is disregarding the public’s priorities.

Housing is an essential aspect of everyone’s quality of life. In Rosemont, we have 5,500 families who spend more than 50% of their income on housing. There are even 2,000 families who spend more than 80% of their income on their housing. Just imagine that. How do they manage? That leaves 20% of their income for

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everything else: transportation, food, clothing. Those people are stuck in deep poverty. The federal government is doing nothing to reinvest in affordable housing.

The government is ignoring this basic issue, which provides quality of life for families. At present, there are people in Rosemont and elsewhere in Montreal who have to settle for housing that is unsanitary or requires significant renovations to become livable.

In an urban area such as Rosemont, public transit is a vital issue. The people of Rosemont are obviously disappointed that the government has not made any provision to relaunch infrastructure programs. They are essential for municipalities.

We want investments in infrastructure, whether bridges or transfers to municipalities for water mains and sewers. It is very important. In Montreal, 30% of treated water is lost because of holes throughout the system.

There must be a vision to modernize our infrastructure and improve public transit. Improving this service would also reduce pollution and dependence on automobiles.

As for the environment, the people of Rosemont are worried about pollution. There are periods of intense smog, especially in the summer, when people with asthma and seniors suffer because of the poor air quality at certain times.

However, in listening to the throne speech, we realized that the Conservatives consider the environment to be a natural resource rather than an essential element that should be considered when any decision is made.

Global warming was mentioned once in the throne speech, but there is no action. There is a void. There is nothing even though the experts informed us this week that greenhouse gas levels are continuing to rise and that we are approaching the point of no return. It will become impossible to prevent global warming. I hope that Canada’s performance at the Bonn conference will be better than at the Copenhagen conference.

In closing, it is unfortunate to see this government stubbornly making irresponsible tax cuts that deprive it of revenue it needs. The government is continuing to make bad choices. The NDP believes that we can and must do better.

• (1645)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his exemplary first speech in the House of Commons. Clearly, the future of the NDP is in very good hands. My question is for my colleague, who spoke about seniors and the food banks that they must go to from time to time.

What more could the government have done to help our seniors get out of poverty?

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Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nickel Belt for his question. For a long time, the NDP has been pushing for the injection of an additional \$700 million into the guaranteed income supplement to help all seniors get out of poverty. This was one of the commitments we made during the election campaign. That is the first thing. The second thing is that we must improve and protect public pension systems in Canada in order to ensure that everyone has enough income after retirement to make ends meet and pay their bills. We must also invest in social housing so that people have the opportunity to live in affordable housing where they can be independent and yet access services adapted to their needs.

Access to health care is also extremely important for seniors. We must therefore stop the slide toward the privatization of our health care system and give people access to health care with their health insurance cards rather than their credit cards.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his election and welcome him to the House.

Earlier, I heard members talk about experiencing déjà vu with this budget. Perhaps the member remembers the movie *Groundhog Day*, in which Bill Murray's character lives the same day over and over, making different mistakes as he tries to charm the character played by Andie MacDowell. We hope that the government will stop making mistakes in its budget and will do things right. I am worried about the budget cuts that were announced in last year's and this year's budget. We do not know how the government will manage to make these cuts, which it is keeping secret. We ask for details, but it refuses to give us any.

Does the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie have anything to say about that?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that pertinent question. His party said that this budget feels like the movie *Groundhog Day*. We prefer to use the expression "copy and paste". It is as though absolutely nothing happened between March and May, as though this government did not hear the needs and demands expressed by Canadians from coast to coast.

The proposed budget cuts are worrisome, in terms of both their scope and the uncertainty surrounding exactly what is going to happen. The government is throwing around huge, staggering numbers—\$4 billion in savings next year alone—without giving any clue as to who will be hit and where the government is going to cut.

We know we are in a difficult budget situation, and the government needs all of its revenues. Now is not the time to give any gifts to large corporations like oil companies and banks, and then turn around and say that the government can no longer invest because it has no money.

The NDP is proposing that the government stop giving gifts to those who do not need them. Last year, Canada's six major banks made over \$20 billion in profits. If we lower their taxes, they are not going to create jobs. That would be a gift to them, when that money is needed to meet the needs of ordinary Canadians.

If we need to find \$4 billion next year, why not put an end to the tax breaks? That would get us halfway there, since that would mean an extra \$2 billion right away.

• (1650)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in the House. First, I wish to salute all my House of Commons colleagues. I consider it a great responsibility and a great honour to represent the people of my riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I would like to thank them today for the trust they placed in me and to say to them that I will defend their interests every day of my term in the coming years.

On May 2, the people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands sent us a clear message: our region deserves to take its rightful place in the Canadian federation. They are ready to contribute to improving their country. The people in my region want change. They rallied around the NDP vision for developing a progressive Canada, a dynamic and enterprising Canada, as the people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands have always been. They also want a Canada where justice and compassion prevail, where families are a priority, and where no one is left behind. I am pleased to be able to contribute, together with the people in my riding, to this wave of change.

With regard to yesterday's budget brought down by my Conservative colleagues in the House, I see that it is more or less the same budget that was brought down in March. Despite the message of non-confidence sent by Quebecers and current worrisome economic indicators, the government has not changed its line of thinking. This is essentially a minimalist budget that includes very few social measures to help people who are contributing more than their fair share to the Canadian treasury. We see that the government is not acting responsibly toward the people it represents.

Of course we commend its commitment to sales tax harmonization, but we are bitterly disappointed in the lack of support for seniors, people in the middle class and the less fortunate. The average disposable income per capita in the Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine region is \$5,000 less than the Quebec average, at just over \$20,000 a year. Some 20% of the people in our riding are 65 or older. The measly \$600 allocated under the guaranteed income supplement to single seniors will not significantly help seniors living in poverty. The tax credit for family caregivers is also more a symbolic measure than true recognition of the enormous task accomplished by these people, mostly women I should point out.

This budget does not contain any proposals for reducing the financial burden on families. In terms of help from the government, most of my constituents will not see any improvement in their living conditions.

What is more, looming cuts to government agencies are making us fear the worst when it comes to support for small to medium-sized businesses. For a large region like Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, whose economy relies mainly on developing natural resources, yesterday's budget is disastrous and cause for serious concern.

The Conservative government announced budgetary cuts to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec to the tune of \$13.4 million in 2013-14. For Fisheries and Oceans Canada, up to \$56.8 million in budgetary cuts are projected for 2013-14. This is totally unacceptable.

In a region where the labour market remains fragile, where salaries are low and natural resources have often been overexploited, resource preservation, enhancement and research programs are essential. Although the region has been working hard to create jobs and the unemployment rate has been steadily decreasing for three years, the unemployment rate was still 12.5% in 2010. Cutting support for the economy of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands will serve only to destroy any hope of maintaining the tentative economic recovery. Rather than continuing the recovery that began several years ago, our region is at risk of regressing and remaining dependent on government support, which will cost more for everyone.

•(1655)

The conscientious exploitation of natural resources belonging to Canadians remains a government responsibility. And, once again, our elected officials are avoiding their responsibilities.

Our analysis of the budget is therefore very pessimistic. We are opposed to the idea of drastically downsizing the government in a context of economic recovery. The repercussions may be even more serious for the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, which have aging populations and are far from the services offered in major centres. However, we remain hopeful that the government will quickly realize that it is about to cause a catastrophe and will change its mind on several points. We also hope that it will strengthen the good measures that it plans to put in place.

For example, the eco-energy program that my dear colleague mentioned earlier could be extended for much longer than one year. Help for family caregivers could be increased significantly. The temporary hiring credit against the increase in employment insurance premiums for SMEs could be made more permanent. As a member of Parliament, I will work to convince my counterparts to strengthen such measures that are positive for our region.

I want our region, which has been hit hard by the forestry crisis, to benefit from the \$60 million investment announced to help forestry companies innovate and compete. The government absolutely must extend this investment beyond one year. The government has not done enough for this industry in the past.

Furthermore, subsidies for the oil companies do nothing to help the people in our region. In my riding, known around the world for its beautiful scenery and wonderful natural resources that attract thousands of sports tourists every year, many people are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing the major polluters instead of encouraging a green economy. The people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands want assurances that their environment will be protected, and the issue of oil at the Old Harry site will be crucial in this part of Canada.

I hope that I can count on the co-operation of all members in the House in adopting practical solutions that will make a real difference

in our riding. Tax cuts will not make a difference when it comes to job creation or the sound exploitation of our natural resources.

I am counting on the leadership of our Prime Minister to respect the mandate that the public has given us and to allow us to do our job in Parliament. I hope that he will listen to us when we propose solutions to help our economy offer new jobs and a decent future for Canadians. I hope that we will be able to show the people in my region that they have a place in an open and visionary Canada.

I believe that we can choose to work together constructively, respecting those who elected us.

•(1700)

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your new role.

During the election I met with thousands of individuals across my riding, Canadians who actually supported the Conservative plan and the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I would like to remind the Speaker and the member opposite that Canadians actually did not support the opposition. In fact 70% of them did not support the opposition.

My question is with respect to seniors. In the budget we have talked about increasing the GIS, \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, benefiting over 680,000 Canadian seniors. I would ask the member if he has concerns regarding seniors, whether he and his colleagues will support the 2011 budget that for the first time increases the GIS and whether they intend to support that initiative to support seniors?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, what has been proposed by the government side regarding supporting seniors, while it is a step forward, is entirely insufficient.

We need to bring seniors out of poverty and a \$600 credit per year is simply inadequate and is not at the right level to help our seniors get to the point where they deserve to be.

They have worked their entire lives to create this beautiful country and quite frankly \$600 a year I suppose is perhaps enough to pay part of their rent for one month, but we are talking about seniors who, by and large, are scraping by and spending their savings in order to pay for their groceries, transportation and to avoid being a burden to their families.

The \$600 credit per year is simply insufficient and we really hope the Conservatives will actually propose something which would be more readily acceptable to Canadian seniors.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment to the chair.

I would also like to congratulate the hon. member opposite on his election to the House. This is a great place to be and a great place to share our ideas and knowledge.

First of all, I would like to thank the voters of the great riding of Medicine Hat for re-electing me as the member for that constituency.

The Budget

My colleague just mentioned this, but I would like to mention it again because it appears that some of the members opposite do not recognize that over 70% of Canadians did not vote for the NDP.

The other thing I would like to point out is that certainly some of the NDP policies and intentions are to tax Canadians heavily and to spend heavily. I wonder if the NDP has actually looked at those kinds of policies to see what has happened in Europe. In particular I am talking about Greece and Spain which are next to being bankrupt.

The policies the NDP is proposing would have a huge deficit impact on Canadians with regard to jobs and opportunities for companies to build this great country of ours.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question and congratulate him also on his election in Medicine Hat.

I thank him as well for his comments from the party that was supported by 40% of the Canadian population, which 60% did not support, so I believe 60% of the Canadian population is actually looking for an alternative to the budget that has been proposed.

When it comes to worrying about increasing taxes, when it comes to worrying about crippling the economy and the GNP in general, frankly, if we were to create more employment, if we were to help small business more, the creation of employment, in and of itself, would bring revenues to our fine government and would help to pay for the services that we are proposing today.

We are not anywhere near the point of thinking that we must go running to the IMF for help with our budget. We have lots of room. We have many innovative ideas. I am very disappointed that the government side was not able to introduce any of those ideas in its budget yesterday.

● (1705)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. I am going to be splitting my time with my colleague, the member of Parliament for Yukon.

As Canada's labour minister, I am pleased to take part in this important debate on the 2011 budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low-tax plan for jobs and growth. This budget is a model of sound fiscal management because it is focused on strengthening Canada's economic recovery by improving the ability of businesses and entrepreneurs to respond to emerging growth opportunities and create jobs.

The Canadian economic recovery is well under way and that is thanks to extraordinary measures in the economic action plan and Canada's solid economic fundamentals. Canadians have every reason to be optimistic about the future.

Our country has posted the strongest economic growth among the G7 countries since mid-2009 and we have recouped all the job losses incurred during the global economic recession. As we continue to recover from this economic downturn, it is more important than ever that we encourage a co-operative and productive workplace.

A harmonious workplace lies at the heart of a prosperous economy. Productivity and innovation thrive in places where work can be done safely, in an environment that values quality, fairness and excellence. By providing mediation and conciliation services to federally-regulated industries that are engaged in collective bargain-

ing, the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service helps employers and unions to resolve their differences without a work stoppage, strike or lockout and the economy becomes stronger as a result of this labour stability.

In the past five years, 832 collective agreements were finalized and 792 of them were reached without a work stoppage. This represents a success rate of more than 95% when a federal conciliator or mediation officer intervenes in a dispute.

If I could, I would like to mention a notable success that has just been achieved on the west coast of Canada. There is a historic eight-year agreement between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada, representing approximately 4,500 longshore workers, and the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association. This represents the longest collective agreement ever negotiated on the west coast of North America. The parties agreed to it themselves and they did it without any interruption in service at our Pacific ports.

It is a noteworthy achievement because it sends a clear message to the rest of the world. That message is that Canada is open for business and we can be relied upon to meet the import and export demands of the 21st century. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan proposes to expand the delivery of the preventive mediation program with an investment of just over \$1 million over two years. It is a modest investment, but it will pay real dividends in the years to come.

Let me now turn my attention to those who often face the brunt during an economic downturn: the workers. Our economic action plan established the wage earner protection program, or WEPP, as it is known. This program helps workers manage one of the toughest challenges they will ever face: going without hard-earned pay because an employer has gone bankrupt.

As a direct result of the WEPP program, eligible workers who lose their jobs and are owed money in the six months prior to their employer going bankrupt or subject to receivership are now compensated for unpaid wages and vacation pay. This also includes severance and termination pay. Therefore, in total, workers can receive up to a maximum of \$3,400, money which is paid out quickly to ensure that the most vulnerable period of time for workers and their families is covered.

● (1710)

The WEPP has made an important difference to those in need. Since January 2009 over 30,000 WEPP claimants have received almost \$67 million in payments and with all these funds going directly to hard-working Canadians they were really the innocent victims of corporate failures.

Our budget provides even more support for workers caught in this unfortunate situation. We are going to extend WEPP to cover employees who lose their jobs when their employers' attempt at restructuring takes longer than six months and is subsequently unsuccessful. It is an important enhancement to a valuable program.

The Budget

The enhanced protection could provide an estimated \$4.5 million annually to financially assist Canadians affected by the bankruptcy of their employer who would not have had coverage under the program as it was developed. This will ensure that employees are not unfairly penalized if their employer tries but fails to restructure in the face of financial difficulties.

Budget 2011 also announces the government's intention to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code to eliminate mandatory retirement in the federal jurisdiction. We are taking this step because we believe that forcing an employee to retire by reason of age is a form of discrimination and is unequal treatment. There is no question that Canadians are living longer and they are more active than ever, so people should be able to choose when they retire unless there are compelling reasons like health and safety concerns that prohibit them from doing so.

The budget strikes the right balance between fiscal prudence and targeted investment. It is no surprise that both business and labour groups have reacted favourably to the proposals in the budget. It is a rare occasion when organized labour comes out and publicly endorses a Conservative budget.

When the labour items in the budget were first presented, Mr. Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I think the member should correct the record. It would be very unfair to have in the House that the Canadian Labour Congress supports this budget. Ken Georgetti has written a very clear statement that the Canadian Labour Congress opposes the budget. I would ask the member to strike that and continue on with her friends at the chambers of commerce and other such businesses. The Canadian Labour Congress does not support the budget. She should be accurate with her information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I think in this circumstance it is a point of debate. We will allow the minister to carry on.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I stand by my statements.

As I was saying, when the labour items in this budget were first presented, Mr. Ken Georgetti, who is the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, stated that he was "pleased with announcements in the budget about extending work sharing programs, EI pilot projects, support for laid-off older workers, and improving wage protection for laid-off workers". That is high praise for those elements of the budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend my hon. colleague the Minister of Finance for the increase in support for seniors and families in this budget as well.

This government recognizes that Canada's seniors helped build and make this country great. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan is continuing to support seniors by enhancing the GIS, extending the new horizons for seniors program, eliminating mandatory retirement and more.

Since 2006 the government has provided over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief to seniors and pensioners. Since 2006 the Conservative government has made families a priority.

We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We introduced the children's fitness tax credit, and due to our strong record of tax relief, total savings for a typical family, such as one in my riding of Halton, are over \$3,000.

In budget 2011 we have added a new children's arts tax credit. We have added the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program. We are helping full-time students to earn more money without affecting their loans and giving them a break on certification fees.

Our government introduced yesterday the next phase of Canada's economic action plan to ensure that Canada remains one of the world's top performing economies.

Today, with the support of budget 2011, the labour program will continue to focus its priorities on protecting Canadian workers and employers, and on strengthening labour management relations while playing a leadership role in intergovernmental and international labour affairs.

• (1715)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest and some surprise at some of the statements my hon. colleague made, particularly quoting Ken Georgetti. Poor Ken is going to be choking on his coffee back at his office when he finds out that he is being rolled out as a supporter of the Conservative Party because Ken was very clear in his opposition.

It goes to the fundamental issue the member talks about, the human right to work as long as a person wants. Charlie Angus died on the shop floor of the Hollinger Mine when he was 68 years old because there were no pensions. People worked in the mines until they died. My grandmother told me every month that she got her Canada pension, "We fought for this and we need to protect this".

So, when people in my riding go back to work at 65, 66 and 67, it is not because it is a human rights choice. It is because they do not have a pension plan that protects them.

I want to ask the member, why is the government continuing to walk away on the biggest single crisis facing Canadian families, which is the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the Canada pension plan, so every senior could retire with dignity?

So, do not say it is their human right to work because they do not have enough money to live on. Their real basic right in Canada is to be able to retire when they want to and have a Canada pension plan that is sufficient. The Conservative government has abandoned seniors on that key element.

The Budget

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. member to perhaps take a look at my past experience because I do not talk about being from an area that mined coal. I am the daughter of a family of coalminers. I was raised by my grandmother on the GIS. I have full understanding of exactly what the member is saying. However, I choose the Conservative way, which is the way we have adopted in this budget.

That has to do with fundamentally putting the tools in the hands of the people to make their own decisions and make their own investments. That is exactly what we are talking about here.

With respect to the member referencing Mr. Georgetti, who is the head of the Canada Labour Congress, I have great respect for him. However, the fact remains that if the hon. member were to choose to take a look at what is reported in the media and it is there in hard copy for him to see, he would absolutely see that I said nothing more than what Mr. Georgetti has said himself.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time that I rise in the House, I would like to thank the great people of Kingston and the Islands for choosing me to be their member in the House of Commons.

The minister stated in her speech, and I heard this many times during the election campaign, that a typical family would save about \$3,000 in taxes per year. What about the lowest quintile of wage earners, the people who really need government's help, the people whom we really should be here looking out for? Does the minister know what a typical family in the lowest quintile would get in tax savings?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, this is the government that introduced tax measures that actually stopped people from having to pay taxes. We are the ones who made it easier for people to be unburdened of taxes. As I mentioned, reducing the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% had a huge impact on those who were at the lowest earning levels.

However, it is also important to note that when we talk about whom we are representing here, and I welcome to the House the member for Kingston and the Islands, we as a Conservative majority government have a strong mandate for a stable enforcement of Canada's action plan. That is what Canadians voted on.

When I represent people in Halton, I represent all people in Halton, not just those whom I pick and choose to represent, every single one of them.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Ledue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, the Minister of Labour, for her words today. I also want to commend her for her actions, particularly with respect to extending the wage earner protection program, something we have worked on in this House, on both sides, for over five years. That is an excellent initiative.

I want to ask her a short question with respect to the role of the federal mediation and conciliation services. Budget 2011 allocates \$1 million over two years. Could she expand on that in her remarks?

● (1720)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the wage earner protection program, I would be remiss if I did not point out that when I became Minister of Labour, it was Mr. Ken Lewenza from

the CAW, another union person, who indicated how much he enjoyed the program and how beneficial it was for workers as well. So it is another case of organized labour working with the Conservative government.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new role in the House. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our Prime Minister for bestowing upon me the great honour to stand before you today to deliver this my maiden speech in the House of Commons.

I want to say congratulations to all members of Parliament on both sides of this House and, in my co-operative nature, would like to say that I for one am agreeable and committed to working with members sitting on the opposite side of the House.

Finally, I would like to offer profound thanks to the citizens of the great Yukon Territory, the land of the midnight sun, for placing their support in me. I wish to express the tremendous pride I feel as I stand here today representing one of 13 provinces and territories that collectively make up the greatest nation in the world.

This is an exciting time of year for young Canadians. I wish to congratulate Yukon College graduates. I encourage them to embrace the college's guiding brand "Start Here Go Anywhere". I wish to congratulate Yukon High School graduates for their accomplishments and the exciting new chapter in their lives.

I am proud to tell our Yukon students that because of the solid leadership of our Prime Minister and the continuation of Canada's economic action plan, they will have jobs to go to; they will have options to pursue a career; some will have savings to travel and explore this magnificent planet; and others will seek new skills and opportunities through post-secondary education.

It is through the strength of our economy and governance, and the continued implementation of Canada's economic action plan that these options are there for them, where other youth in the free world are not so fortunate. They can look forward to the modernization of the Canada student loans program and grants program. They can enjoy a more vibrant and accessible post-secondary education system through annual support to students and families.

Our government is committed to promoting enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy, fields which are important for meeting a range of social and economic challenges in health, the environment, natural resources, and national security.

I am especially proud to state that our government has made Canada's north a cornerstone of our agenda. I firmly believe that the land and the people of the north are, to some degree, a greater image of all Canadians. We are proud of the culture and history that is guarded daily by first nation, aboriginal and northern Canadians. We rest easy knowing they are determined, adventurous, and proud individuals who define the essence of community, co-operation and a true north strong and free.

From that perspective, I say to all members of the House that a budget and a plan that is good for the north is a budget and a plan that is good for all Canadians.

The Budget

Federal support for the territories totals just over \$3 billion in 2011-12, an increase of \$847 million since 2005-06. This long-term growing support helps ensure that the territories have the resources required to provide essential public services and contributes to shared national objectives, including health care, post-secondary education, and other key components of Canada's social programs.

Connecting our country by road, from sea to sea to sea, is one such example of how diverse, yet how Canadians are and must be. The completion of the Dempster Highway from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk will support the northern communities through better access to public supplies and services, decreased cost of living, promotion of tourism, and reduced costs related to onshore oil and gas exploration.

It is the position of this government that increasing first nations community and government participation in the Canadian economy is the most effective way to improve the socio-economic conditions of first nations people.

I look forward to working with Yukon first nation governments and communities as they pursue emerging economic development at local levels. Opportunities that ensure a balance between the development of the environment and a connection between first nations people and the land, water, fish and wildlife of their traditional territories, so that it remains strong for generations to come.

● (1725)

The protection of the environment across Canada, and indeed Yukon and within first nations' traditional territories, will be supported through promoting the development of clean energy technology through an \$8 million investment in aboriginal and northern communities, technologies and clean energy projects designed to ensure the reduction of greenhouse gases, which have national and regional impacts.

We are providing nearly \$870 million over two years to address climate change and air quality, including the extension of the eco-energy homes program that will help homeowners make their homes more energy efficient and reduce the burden of high energy costs.

The Government of Canada has committed more than \$3.2 million in funding to improve housing conditions for first nations in Yukon. Of this, Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation will receive close to \$755,000 to retrofit 67 housing units and \$630,000 toward the construction of 2 new units.

Education is key to the success of individuals, their families and communities and improving educational outcomes for first nations will benefit Canada as a whole. We believe first nations students should have an education that will see them graduate with the skills they need to enter the labour market successfully and participate fully in Canada's economic opportunities.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan invests \$9 million over two years to expand territorial colleges, adult-based education programs, particularly in remote communities, to enhance their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities in the north.

An additional \$1.7 million for labour market training will be added as direct, targeted support for the territories. Families of

children enrolled in artistic, cultural, recreation and development activities will benefit from the introduction of a children's art tax credit, an opportunity for children across Yukon, such as those at Robert Service School in Dawson City, with the School of Visual Arts only a few blocks away.

This tax credit builds on actions to help parents and children, such as the children's fitness tax credit, so energetic youth like the ones I know so well at Hidden Valley School can enjoy the positive benefits of a healthy and active childhood. The tax free savings account, universal child care benefit, the child tax credit and the first-time home buyers tax credit will all translate into assistance specifically for northerners who realize a higher cost of living in remote and isolated regions in Canada.

Eligible seniors across Canada, and indeed in the north, will receive an additional annual benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and up to \$840 for couples.

Attracting doctors and nurses to remote communities through a loan forgiveness initiative is a critical step forward in improving the lives of family physicians, nurse practitioners and the clients they serve in these regions.

The territories will also benefit from continued direct targeted support in 2011-12, including \$800,000 for the wait time reduction fund as part of the 10-year plan to strengthen health care. They will also benefit from the two year extension to the territorial health system sustainability initiative, which will provide \$60 million over two years to consolidate progress made in reducing the reliance on outside health care systems and medical travel.

I am excited that budget 2011 will allow communities in the territories to benefit from a legislative permanent annual investment in the municipal infrastructure through the gas tax fund. The permanency of this fund will give communities the confidence and stability in their ability to access and utilize long-term infrastructure funding to meet the individual communities' specific needs.

Last but not least, I, along with many other new members of Parliament, may very well be standing in the House today because of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. I am pleased to speak to Yukoners especially but to all Canadians, farmers, trappers, sportsmen and women, athletes, aboriginal and first nations peoples who have abided by the rules, contributed to our history, culture and to our economy, citizens like Yukon legend, Alex Van Bibber born on the banks of the Pelly River in 1916, who still lives off the land and at 95 years young still teaches Yukoners essential wilderness skills.

The Budget

For fellow Yukon citizens, fellow Canadians, we will introduce legislative amendments to eliminate the requirement to register non-restricted long guns. In doing so, this government will not allow billions to be wasted or responsible, law-abiding Canadians to be affected, but will rather find more effective ways to keep our communities and neighbourhoods safe, our youth active, healthy and educated, our citizens assisted and employed, our homeless sheltered, our crime prevention strategies focused, criminals accountable and victims of crime supported.

In the words of Yukon's outdoor writer and columnist, Murray Martin, "I'll say Amen to that brother!"

• (1730)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all of my colleagues, from all political parties, on being elected. I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker. I would also like to thank all of my constituents and all those who have placed their trust in me. I am also pleased to be part of this very youthful NDP caucus. I am pleased that young people are better represented here in Parliament now, since the May 2 election.

I have a question for my hon. Conservative colleague regarding post-secondary education, which he mentioned in his speech. Given that students make up a large percentage of the people in my riding, I would like to know what the government intends to do to help them, since they often live below the poverty line and have a hard time making ends meet at the end of the month.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, that question is one that came up in Yukon while we were talking with our constituents.

The Conservative government has a plan in budget 2011 to offer an equalization on part-time and full-time student loans. We are looking at modernizing the Canadian student loan program to help students realize savings. Tied into health is the forgiveness of loans for doctors and nurses. This would be a tremendous benefit across Canada in attracting people to remote regions, such as our north, and would make it a more attractive career for students to pursue.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Yukon spoke about climate change and the fact that budget 2011 contained hundreds of thousands of dollars for home energy retrofits, which is a good thing. However, is the member prepared to ask his government's ministers for the millions of dollars year after year to deal with the effects of global warming, which, as the member for Yukon knows, will be the most intense in the Arctic?

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, we first have to start working on identifying some of the root causes of global warming and climate change. Investments in research and development will permit us to understand where we best spend the money and invoke the greatest initiatives to reduce climate change and the effects, which we are certainly aware of across the Arctic and the northern territories.

This is an area of key importance to the citizens of Yukon. I will be working with my riding and climate change experts in the territory to hear solutions and ideas to bring forward to this

government to ensure that climate change remains an important issue.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment and I congratulate my friend on his major speech in this most august of places in this beautiful country of ours.

The member talked at length about many of the items that were in budget 2011. He drew our attention to what it meant to him and his riding of Yukon.

I would like to hear him expand on the issue of the 15% mineral exploration tax credit. I would also like him to talk about what the government's creation of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency means to him and his riding. As well, if he could expand on the hiring credit for small businesses and any other items he may not have had time to tell us about that mean so much to his great riding of Yukon.

• (1735)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, I did not mention that the 15% mineral exploration tax credit will be continued for an additional year into 2012. This will help our companies raise capital for mineral exploration.

I am proud to say that the Yukon territory is currently enjoying a 4% unemployment rate because of Conservative government job creation. That is the lowest in our country for consecutive months. We used to have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. The Conservative government's action plan has allowed Yukoners to work.

We will continue to work on poverty issues, but I am very proud of that fact.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver East.

It is an honour to rise again in the House as part of a much bigger NDP team, now the official opposition. I would like to begin by thanking the people of northern Manitoba who have sent me back to Ottawa to fight for them. I would like to thank people from Sakgeeng to Churchill, from Berens River to Pukatawagan, from The Pas, Flin Flon and Thompson, people from first nations, Métis communities, urban centres and communities all across the north, people who were all part of sending a strong message that they wanted Ottawa to work with them.

People in northern Manitoba recognize that a lot of wealth comes from our area. It comes from the north, from our industries, from traditional territories, from people's hard work. However, we in the north also know that we do not see a federal government that works with us to give back. This is yet another federal budget that fails to give back to our north.

With this budget, the government is ignoring first nations and the real struggles they face day to day.

First nations in northern Manitoba face some of the most appalling living conditions in our country. My question is this. Where is the removal of the 2% cap for which first nations have been asking for years? Where is the funding for housing? Not only was there no increase, but there was a reduction when compared to commitments made in previous years. Where is the funding for water and sewer investments?

The Island Lake First Nations have been asking for a federal commitment to water and sewer services as a way of preventing some of the most severe health challenges they face year after year. Yet when I visited Garden Hill First Nation just two months ago, people showed me the latest response of the federal government to their call of action: a big blue water bin and a small grey pail with a seat on it. This is the kind of dignity that Canada's first peoples have been shown by the federal government.

As we sit here today, Tadoule Lake, one of the northern-most communities in Manitoba, is struggling, given the breakdown in water and sewer services in their community. Children have been forced to not attend school on a regular basis. These are the basic needs of first nations in my constituency and this is the reflection of the federal government's neglect of first nations people and the third world conditions in which they live.

Where is the investment in education and post-secondary student sponsorship? Gods Lake Narrows, Gods River and Oxford House have been calling on the need for federal investment, to work with them in building new schools, to meet the demands of an increasingly young population in their communities. Aboriginal people are among the youngest people in Canada. Why is the government failing to invest in their future?

When it comes to urban aboriginal people, the budget shows no commitment to working with urban aboriginal peoples and showing the necessary long-term support for critical services, as provided by the aboriginal friendship centres. The government continues to fail first nations and Métis people in northern Manitoba and across Canada.

With this budget, the government is ignoring Canadian workers. There are corporate tax giveaways to big profitable corporations, but no action to keep jobs here at home. My home community of Thompson is having a fight for its life with a foreign-owned mining company, Vale, whose purchase of Inco was allowed by the federal government. Instead of keeping the wealth of our resources in our hands, the government approved a \$1 billion loan to Vale, the very company that is taking hundreds of jobs away from Manitoba. The government has essentially assisted and given money to Vale to shift jobs away from our province.

Young people working in the refinery and the smelter in Thompson are very worried about their future and that of their young families. People nearing retirement are worried they will be left out in the cold. An entire community that has helped build the wealth of a corporation and a country stands to lose the very wealth that comes from the resources on which we stand.

The Budget

Where is the commitment to stand by workers in our communities? Where is the government's plan to allow Canadian people, and not foreign companies, to benefit from our resources?

With this budget, the government is taking the west for granted. I stand here as a voice from western Canada, speaking out for the thousands of people who are saying no to the government's plan to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board.

• (1740)

Why is this government showing such contempt for the democratic rights of farmers to choose? Where is this government's concern for the livelihoods of prairie people and prairie communities?

In our part of the west, the loss of the Canadian Wheat Board would mean the loss of the port of Churchill that depends on CWB shipments. This government is supporting the loss of that port and the livelihoods of people in Churchill, along the bay line and across the north, in addition to ignoring the wishes of farmers across western Canada.

This government is also ignoring the west through its extreme cuts to Western Economic Diversification Canada, a cut of 54.4% to its budget. Our regions have a constant need for diversification in economic development. Yet the rural regions of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia are being left out in the cold when it comes to the cooperation they need from the federal government in order to diversify. What will these cuts translate into? There will be fewer businesses opening up, fewer services emerging and more young people leaving our communities, communities that are struggling to survive. Is this truly the government's vision for western Canada?

With this budget the government is ignoring the number one priority of so many Canadians, the priority of health care. People across northern Manitoba and across Canada do not have the most basic care from a family doctor. In fact, five million Canadians do not have a family doctor, that first line of support when they face health challenges.

I remember going door to door throughout the election, even during the last parliament, in communities such as Flin Flon and hearing in house after house people express to me their anxiety, their worry, that they did not have a family doctor. I heard the stories of northerners about family doctors who came into their communities for one year, or maybe two years if they were lucky, and then leave, leaving their patients to hang, leaving families to worry, leaving people less healthy at the end of the day.

When we look at the leadership that we need to see from the federal government in working with our provinces, in working with our regional health authorities and in working with our first nations in aboriginal communities across the north, what we see is deflection and a real lack of vision when it comes to supporting the universal public health care that Canadians are so proud of.

The Budget

In closing, we in the official opposition are sending the message that the federal government has a duty to stand up for the priorities of all Canadians, from housing to education and health care and for maintaining and creating quality jobs based on our controlling our resources and our livelihoods. Canadians are looking to a federal government to stand up for them.

However, what we see today in the budget is the continuation of a record of failure in standing up for them. Instead, the federal government is looking at the big corporations and at friends who are already doing quite well at the expense of looking at what first nations, Métis, northern people and people across our country are looking for.

What northerners and Canadians have to count on, though, is an official opposition that will fight for them, that will fight for the dignity and social justice that every Canadian deserves.

• (1745)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest that not all aboriginal people from her riding share her opinion. I am not one of them. Of course, I originally resided in Thompson and I know that many people have a different philosophy.

On the topic of aboriginal issues, though, I would like to ask her a question in relation to property. As an aboriginal person, I can own property anywhere I live. However, first nations people cannot do so within their communities on reserve. I am just wondering if she feels that first nations people should be second-class citizens without the opportunity to purchase property, or if in fact they should have that right.

I am wondering what her opinion is on that topic.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would welcome the member across actually visiting my constituency and spending some time with some of the first nations people there, who have not only expressed a great deal of support for our party but also a great deal of concern about this member's government's agenda when it comes to the very needs they have. Whether it is the complete lack of funding for them for education, health care, economic development or housing, first nations in Manitoba, and northern Manitoba where this member comes from, arguably see some of the highest rates of neglect in the country.

As far as issues such as matrimonial property rights are concerned, this has been a critical issue in our last Parliament. I would ask the member to hear the loud and clear messages coming from regions like ours where there is a respect for the treaties and a respect for the aboriginal communities' role in self-government, an important debate that will continue in this Parliament.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have known the hon. member's father for in excess of 18 years, a good number of years. He is one of the more articulate individuals in the Manitoba legislature and, in fact, one of the most effective hecklers. It would be interesting to hear what he has to say about the NDP policy on no heckling.

Having said that, my question is with regard to the east side versus west side development of the hydro transmission line. When she makes reference to the importance of federal-provincial relations and

trying to assist the aboriginal population in northern Manitoba, I would point out that there are many east side residents within the aboriginal community, including chiefs, who are saying that the line should be going down the east side.

Does the member feel that the federal government has a role to play in the whole east side-west side issue? Given the importance of the aboriginal community, what role does the federal government have to play in that whole debate?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a great deal of interest in the communities that I represent. I invite the member to visit the east side first nations and hear directly from them, the chiefs and the councils that have signed the memorandums of understanding for road development. Considering the importance of economic development in the region, it is something that the east side grid would not bring to their region.

What is the federal government's role when it comes to east side first nations? It is listening to them for the water and sewer services they need, listening to them for the housing they need, listening to them for the new schools they need. The federal government has a lot of work to do and we hope to see it start work now.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your new role in the House.

I would like to ask the member about a national child care strategy. Of course, the member ably pointed out the great lack in this budget before us, whether it is housing, health care or first nations. One of the other glaring absences is a national child care strategy. Women and their families across this country have been working since the early 1970s to have a national child care strategy in place.

What would the member have liked to see with regard to quality, affordable, accessible and publicly funded child care?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan on her return to the House.

One of the great proposals put forward by my party is the need for a national child care strategy. I represent one of the youngest regions in Canada and the need for such a strategy is the most acute in my region. The NDP hopes that the federal government will listen to Canadian families and young people and women who are saying that they want a national child care program working in their communities.

• (1750)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, for being appointed to the chair.

I am happy to rise in the House today and follow the member for Churchill, hearing what she had to say about the budget. Although we represent very different parts of Canada, she from the north and I from an urban centre in the south on the west coast, it is really quite incredible to know that what she heard on the doorsteps during the election was very similar to what I had heard from my constituents in Vancouver East.

The Budget

I would like to thank the good folks of East Vancouver for re-electing me the sixth time. It is a pretty amazing community of very diverse neighbourhoods. It is a place where immigrants come, where people make their way in Canada. It is a place that has a lot of labour history and social activism. However, it is also a place that is really struggling. People are struggling with the incredibly high housing costs in Vancouver. It is a good place to live, but people are really hurting and are having a hard time.

I feel so incredibly proud to be part of this amazing caucus of New Democrats. So many young people have been elected, it feels like a breath of fresh air has come in. I hope that they turn politics upside down in this place, as we get new perspectives and experience from these young people.

In the election campaign we heard so many people say that young people had to get involved. They asked why young people did not vote, why they were not engaged. Here we see it with some incredible candidates. In my riding of East Vancouver, the engagement of the youth vote was really something that we have never seen so strongly before. We had vote mobs. People were raising the visibility and the awareness of the campaign and the issues. The use of social media, whether it was Facebook or Twitter, was quite wonderful to see. It provided a new way of interacting with voters and constituents. I feel very proud to be part of a caucus that has an historic number of women and also so many young people who are going to give us strength and a sense of hope about what politics will be in the future.

Regarding the budget that we heard yesterday, there are two things that I want to focus on because they are important to folks in my community. One is health care and the other is housing.

I received an email from a young family just a couple of days ago. They have lived in Vancouver for about 14 years. They have a combined income of \$80,000. They are working hard. They talk about saving to buy a house and say it is like running toward a finish line that is moving away from them faster than they can run. They point out that they are currently paying \$1,450 a month for a small one bedroom apartment in a house of three suites in East Vancouver. East Vancouver used to be relatively affordable but now Vancouver overall is a very expensive city in which to live.

Therefore, one of the things I was looking for in the budget was whether or not there would be any commitment by the government to an affordable housing program. I was incredibly disappointed to see there was not even a mention of housing in the budget. It is not just in my community but right across this country, whether it is in the north where people are living in appalling third world conditions, or whether it is in urban centres or among the homeless.

Metro Vancouver just had a recent homeless count and we know that nearly 2,000 people are living in shelters. Part of the count included people who were staying overnight in jail or detox or an addiction facility. We know that the number of people living in shelters is still going up. It is a crisis across the country.

The fact that the Conservative government has turned a complete blind eye to the housing crisis that has developed in this country is quite astounding to me. Maybe the Conservatives believe it is something that government should not worry about.

However, the reality is that in metro Vancouver and the Lower Mainland there is now a rental housing supply coalition. It may surprise some members opposite to know that part of that coalition includes the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, the Canadian Homebuilders' Association of B.C., the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C., the B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association and the Tenants Resource and Advisory Centre. These coalition partners usually do not work together but they are now because the crisis in our city is so severe. The City of Vancouver is doing as much as it can, but the federal government has been absolutely absent.

● (1755)

I heard the minister of HRSD say in question period that the government has put all this money into the economic action plan, et cetera. The fact is that was a one-time infusion. What we need in this country is a long-term national housing strategy. I have fought tooth and nail for that for many years and I know that all of us in the NDP are going to continue to do that. We cannot just continue with a society where some people get more and more wealthy and other people, even middle-class people now, are suffering. Coming back to this young couple that makes \$80,000 a year. Once that was a good enough amount of money to buy a house, a modest house, but no longer. So not only have we people at the very bottom who are more and more vulnerable, but we also have students, seniors and young families who are finding the housing affordability crisis something that is now eating into their food money, their education money, and it is getting harder and harder to make ends meet.

That is something that I know we, as New Democrats, are going to fight tooth and nail for.

The second thing I want to mention is health care because this is obviously a huge issue that is looming before us.

I heard the Minister of Health today, because we raised it in question period, talk about the health accord that is coming up for renegotiation in 2014. She basically said not to worry, that it is three years away. I want to tell her and the Conservative government that we are really worried about what is going to happen with the health accord. The accord that we had in 2004 that came about with Paul Martin's government, basically had no strings attached, but it did make some commitments for a national pharmaceutical program, for long-term care, for home care. It made some commitments that there would be progress on these things, like a renewed phase two of medicare.

This week the Health Council of Canada, which is the monitoring group for the accord, basically said that the national pharmaceutical program has been stalled. Why? Because the federal government has been absent.

The Budget

This is an issue that crosses every political stripe. It crosses every part of society in terms of people's concern about what is going to happen to our public health care system. It is often portrayed and there are myths put forward that somehow medicare, or our public health care system, is not sustainable. This is actually not true. It is something that the Conservatives would like to make us believe because there has been a great lobby from powerful pharmaceutical companies and lobbyists to privatize our system. However, medicare is actually very sustainable. It is actually the private health costs like the costs of drugs, that are driving up the costs of health care. We see a situation where 25% of Canadians do not have any drug coverage. It is astounding that people are digging deeper and deeper into their pockets to pay for basic prescription costs.

I want to put the other side of the House on notice that on the issue of health care members will see an enormous amount of vigour and vigilance from the NDP to hold the government to account and to ensure that the health accord that is renegotiated covers these basic quality of life issues around medicare so that we uphold the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Vancouver East for being re-elected, I believe she said for a sixth time. That shows the confidence that the people from Vancouver East have in their member. I can assure them that they are well represented.

I would like to ask the hon. member to explain to the House what a national housing strategy would do for the poor of Canada.

• (1800)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to thank my good colleague on his re-election. I know that he has worked very hard for his constituents. Also, he is one of the members who very much supports the idea of a national housing strategy.

It is very simple. It is the idea that the federal government has a critical role to play in the most basic of human rights, that is, the provision of safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible housing.

In fact, we used to have really good housing programs in this country. The federal government always played a role. But, in the name of cutting the deficit in the 1990s, that was all gone. We should learn from that. It was a former Liberal government. The consequence of that public policy decision has been disastrous in terms of increasing homelessness.

We are absolutely committed to the need for the federal government to be a player, to participate with the provinces, the territories and the municipalities to ensure that there is a national housing strategy so that no Canadian, wherever he or she lives, is homeless or does not have safe, secure and affordable housing.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be here and to represent Okanagan—Coquihalla. I want to applaud my colleague's election win and thank her for bringing up her concerns in the House today.

I have a simple question on health care. Health care is something that we are all concerned about, as Canadians did say at the doorsteps, although it seems that we all must have selective hearing because what I heard at the door is much different than what many of the other members on this side of the House have said.

However, when it comes to health care, we have said we will carry through with our commitments. We have said we are going to continue to fund the 6%. Since it is a provincial responsibility, how does the member propose we carry forward, knowing that? It is not something to be bullied or pushed. It is something the provinces have to work with in conjunction with the federal government. I would just like to hear how the member plans to do that.

Also, how does the member plan to pay for it? We all know we have the best of intentions but there are real issues here as far as where the money goes and where it comes from.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I have not actually heard anyone, and far be it from us, to suggest that there is going to be any bullying that takes place. It is a negotiated agreement and I would agree there has been a commitment by all parties that there should be a 6% increase, even two years after the accord continues.

However, it is not only about the money; it is about where that money goes and what it is used for. One of the real challenges we face is that we now have a patchwork across the country. Some provinces have some drug coverage programs. Some provinces have some long-term care or home care. It is a real patchwork.

Medicare was started by Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan, and that is really an icon of Canadian value. We believe that phase two of medicare must encompass at least a national drug coverage plan. That is what we have to negotiate. Believe me, the provinces would love to do that, but what has been absent is the federal government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on the previous question, health care is a provincial responsibility, but the Canada Health Act ensures and guarantees that the federal government has a role to play, as it should I would ultimately argue.

Does the member believe that the Canada Health Act is something that should be enforced? If so, to what degree? Also, is there a need for any amendments to the Canada Health Act?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Act is the foundation of our health care system and we need to live up to the spirit and the law of what the Canada Health Act is.

I was asked earlier if it is affordable. If we took even some of the \$31 billion in corporate tax cuts that has been taken out of the public purse, we could easily afford what we need to do, whether it is health care, housing, childcare, name it. The pie is there; it is just the way it is divided.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in the debate on budget 2011. Before I begin, I would like to thank my constituents for putting their trust in me to again represent them in the House of Commons.

The budget we have before us today represents the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It builds on our government's previous successes. In January 2009, Canada found itself in the midst of a global economic recession, the worst since the Great Depression more than 80 years ago.

Our government responded swiftly with Canada's economic action plan to deal with the crisis. The results speak for themselves. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Canada has weathered the recession better than any other country in the world. With Canada's economic action plan, we protected jobs and made long-term investments that are allowing the economy to emerge stronger than ever before and created over half a million jobs since July 2009.

Now it is time for the next phase of our plan. We will be focused on the economy, on creating jobs, reducing the deficit and making key strategic investments.

I spent a lot of time listening to Surrey residents. Their message was loud and very clear. The economy is the number one issue facing Canada and our government. Our Conservative government rightly has a reputation for sound financial management. Prior to the global recession we kept the budget balanced, we paid down the debt and we cut taxes.

In fact, since coming to office in 2006, our government has cut taxes more than 120 times. Over one million Canadians have been removed from the tax rolls. The average Canadian family is paying \$3,000 less in taxes each and every year.

We did all of this while investing new money into social programs and bringing our military out of its dark ages with important investments in modern equipment. Thanks to our prudent management of the nation's books, when the global recession hit we were in the financial position where we used stimulus spending to spark the economy without doing permanent damage to the books.

The stimulus spending has now come to an end and it is time to return to balanced budgets. Budget 2010 contained a three point plan to accomplish this goal, winding down temporary stimulus, putting in place targeted spending, restrained measures and reviewing government administrative and overhead costs.

We will not balance the budget by cutting transfers to the provinces for important social programs, like health care and education. That is the Liberal way, not the Conservative way.

With budget 2011 federal support to provinces and territories will reach an all-time high of over \$56 billion, which is almost \$2.2 billion more than last year. For B.C., this totals over \$5.4 billion in 2011-12, or \$1,182 per capita. There is almost \$3.8 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$216 million from last year. The health transfers will continue to grow annually through a 6% escalator.

There is over \$1.5 billion through the Canada social transfer. For my province of British Columbia, this payment represents an increase of \$349 million since 2005-06. This long-term growing support helps ensure that British Columbia has the resources required to provide essential public services.

The Budget

With this budget, we are building on our plan laid out last year to balance the budget. With our government-wide strategic and operating review, we will balance the budget by 2014-15.

• (1805)

Building on the ambitious agenda of continuing tax relief, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes additional steps to reduce taxes for Canadians and businesses. These tax measures will provide taxpayers in B.C. with approximately \$270 million in tax relief over the following five years. This includes a new family caregiver tax credit that will provide almost \$103 million in relief, and a new children's arts tax credit that will provide almost \$68 million in relief.

The next phase in Canada's economic action plan also takes steps to improve the fairness, neutrality and integrity of the tax system, closing tax loopholes and limiting tax planning opportunities.

Our government recognizes our seniors as valuable members of our society who contribute a diversity of skills, knowledge and experience to their families and communities. Canada's seniors helped build and make this country a great place for all of us to live. That is why we are supporting our seniors in a number of different ways, including: over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief; removing over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls; introducing pension income splitting; doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000; increasing the age credit amount by \$2,000; and establishing the tax free savings account, which is particularly beneficial for seniors.

In this budget, we are taking additional steps to support our seniors. We are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement so that low-income seniors will receive additional annual top-up benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will help more than 680,000 seniors across our great country. We are enhancing the new horizons for seniors program with an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors, and to expand awareness of elder abuse. We are extending the targeted initiative for older workers and eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees to give seniors more choice.

Our Conservative government knows that seniors are a diverse group with different interests and concerns. We are committed to ensuring that policies, programs and services meet the evolving needs of all seniors. Taken together, the initiatives we have introduced will help to ensure that more seniors can live with dignity and security as they grow older.

Another key point of this budget deals with public funding for federal political parties. I am speaking about the annual per-vote subsidy introduced by the former Liberal government in 2004. Governments have a duty to use taxpayer dollars wisely, especially in a time of fiscal restraint when families are struggling to make ends meet. That is why we are now following through on our government's campaign commitment to phase out per-vote subsidies for political parties.

The Budget

The government will introduce legislation to eliminate the subsidy in 51¢ increments starting on April 1 next year until it is completely eliminated by 2015-16. It will generate savings of up to \$30 million. Our government has always opposed direct taxpayer subsidies to political parties and believes that political parties should rely primarily on their supporters for their funding.

When one considers everything that we are proposing, it is no surprise that this budget has been so favourably received all across the country. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities declared that budget 2011 delivered a vital commitment to cities and communities to develop a new, long-term federal infrastructure plan.

Our members appreciate that this budget is focused on ensuring that our officers have the tools and resources necessary to protect our communities effectively and efficiently. This is a good budget that ensures safety, security and prosperity for all Canadians.

● (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the voters in my magnificent riding, which is unique both in its composition and in the challenges it faces.

Earlier, we were speaking of challenges such as climate change, the development of natural resources—which contribute greatly to the wealth of this country, environmental protection, the future of aboriginal peoples and the future of our relations with aboriginal peoples. Today, there is a lot of talk about a national action plan. Today, I can tell you that there are major challenges to be faced by many of the communities that I will be representing over the next four years. Whether in terms of education or health, one of the issues that has come up time and again in aboriginal communities in recent years is the issue of housing and living conditions in aboriginal communities.

In my riding, there are 14 Inuit, 9 Cree, and 2 Algonquin communities. This problem has been talked about by aboriginal leaders everywhere in Canada for many years.

When will this government give us an action plan to address the crisis that has been going on for years?

[English]

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and congratulate him on his election.

This budget is good for Canada. It is good for Canadians. It is good for my constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells. This budget includes child care. It has something for everyone, including farmers, students, families, seniors, businesses and aboriginals. There is \$97.2 million to support various aboriginal initiatives.

There is a diverse range of organizations, public interest groups, and commentators that are applauding budget 2011 as a positive plan to create jobs and promote economic growth. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said:

The extension of the two-year write-off for investments in manufacturing and processing technologies announced in today's federal budget is critical to sustaining Canada's economic recovery.

This tax measure gives manufacturers the confidence to invest in their future by boosting productivity and enhancing technologies.

Let us see what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I appreciate the interest and enthusiasm, but we do have to get a couple of more questions in.

Questions and comments, the member for Kingston and the Islands

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things in the hon. member's speech that I just cannot let pass.

One is the statement that “prior to the global recession, we kept the budget balanced”. I might remind the House that the budget actually went into deficit because of increased spending before the recession.

Second, I find it very strange and perverse to be bragging about all the people removed from tax rolls. In fact, the 20% of people in my riding who live below the poverty line might like to be in a position to have the income to pay taxes.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate this member as well on his election.

Under the leadership of the Conservative government, Canada has weathered the global recession better than nearly all other industrialized countries. I am very proud of our government. Indeed, with the help of Canada's economic action plan, we have emerged as one of the world's top performing advanced economies.

Here are the facts. Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth with nearly 540,000 new jobs created across Canada. We are proud of our record. We are proud of our government and we are proud of our Prime Minister.

● (1820)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to be back in the House, I first want to thank the constituents of Selkirk—Interlake for sending me back for the fourth time. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to represent the great people of Selkirk—Interlake.

We had an incredible election. I travelled almost 10,000 kilometres across my riding, which is slightly bigger than the province of Nova Scotia. However, it is great to be here to advocate on behalf of my constituents.

I want to thank the almost 300 volunteers on my campaign team for helping to get me re-elected. I also thank my staff in both my constituency office and here on the Hill for all the great work they have done for me over the past several years.

I extend my deep love and appreciation to my wife Kelly and my daughters, Cortney, Taylor and Cassidy, for their continued support and love and for allowing me to do this job and to be so far away from the farm.

I also congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your new appointment. This is your first day on the job in this new role and we are looking forward to working with you over the next four and a half years.

Indeed, I congratulate all members for being elected to this esteemed House. This is a great opportunity for all of us here to debate policy and acts and to deal with legislation that will improve the lives of Canadians. We always have differences of opinion but it is a great opportunity to talk about those opinions in the House in a respectful way. I am looking forward to the improved decorum that we will bring to the House.

What we are dealing with today is budget 2011, which is a rerun of what we dealt with back in March. I congratulate the Minister of Finance for retabling this document because we took this document to the people after March 25 and we campaigned on it. We talked about all the great things that are happening in the budget and Canadians overwhelmingly said yes, that they supported it. In my riding, over 65% of the people support the government's policies and this budget.

This budget is great for my riding of Selkirk—Interlake. It is great for Manitoba and it is great for all of Canada. I really want to talk about how this budget, which is so fiscally responsible, getting us back to balanced budgets, eliminating the deficit and continuing to grow our economy and create opportunities for Canadians, is so important for rural Canadians.

One of the highlights in the budget, at least for me, is the way that we will attract more doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners to rural areas. In my riding of Selkirk—Interlake, and indeed in Manitoba, we see the provincial government and different health agencies trying to recruit doctors from all over the world. That is not sustainable and that has not really worked. A lot of them do not want to stay in rural areas and so they move away.

The Conservative government is proposing a made in Canada solution. We will offer student loan forgiveness for doctors up to \$40,000, and for nurses and nurse practitioners up to \$20,000 if they practise in rural communities. They would get to come right out of university, establish themselves in rural communities, maybe meet a significant other, start up their practices and really get to fall in love with our rural way of life. To me, that is exciting and something that will really pay dividends long term.

Another thing in the budget is a new \$3 million initiative to help communities develop a more integrated approach to dealing with palliative and end of life care. In Manitoba, unfortunately, palliative care is treated differently in rural areas than in the city of Winnipeg. In the city, the provincial NDP government funds palliative care. However, in rural areas, we need to volunteer, do all sorts of fundraising drives and hospice walks just so we can pay for coordinators and programs. It is important that our government is stepping up at the federal level to supply \$3 million to communities that want to develop an integrated approach to palliative care. That is something that is so desperately needed across Canada.

Tying in with that is the new tax credit for family caregivers. That is something that will provide dollars to those people who take care of a loved one who is sick or is in palliative care and allow them to

be recognized economically for the service they are providing that is not being provided through the health care system.

● (1825)

We have heard a lot of talk today about the increase in the guaranteed income supplement. It is a great move. We will see dollars go up for individuals and for couples, and it will help the most disadvantaged seniors.

If we look at rural areas, we often see seniors who are widows or who come from a farm family or a small business where they did not contribute to a pension or do not have any CPP. They really do live on their OAS and GIS. Therefore \$50 a month, \$600 a year, is a big improvement for those seniors who are still living below the poverty line.

Maybe it is not enough. We hear that all the time. However, it is the first step and it is the first time anything has been done. The former Liberal government did absolutely nothing.

I am proud that our government recognized it. Now we are stepping up and providing the assistance that is so desperately needed.

We have also instituted the new horizons program and are increasing it to \$10 million a year. That new horizons program for seniors has been very well received in my rural communities. New horizons groups and different senior resource groups have been able to access money to help seniors be mentors in our areas, to provide accessibility into different facilities and to develop programs and places where they can meet and gather. That is also where we have stepped up. We developed the program, and seniors across this country have thanked us.

Of course this budget really does support our business community. Up and down my main streets, it is all small business. We do have some manufacturing and some medium-sized enterprises, and there are a few large corporations in the riding, but overwhelmingly it is like most of Canada, where two-thirds of the businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises. They employ over 60% of Canadians. That is where we should be putting our efforts, and we have.

They have benefited from the tax cuts we have brought forward. They will benefit from the new EI holiday for new hires. That tax credit will assist in developing more jobs' and long-term gainful employment for people in our areas. That is important for rural Canada.

We also see that they will benefit from the new capital cost allowance. We are extending it so they can pay off their purchases over two years on an accelerated basis. The accelerated capital cost allowance will see them retool, be more productive and be more competitive, which again helps our manufacturing base. We are seeing a growth in manufacturing in my riding.

Our rural municipalities have really benefited. They thank the federal government for making the gas tax fund a permanent measure that they can now count on and bank on. They can go in a year ahead and know that these dollars are coming from the federal government. They find it just fantastic.

The Budget

The infrastructure investments we have made throughout my riding and throughout Canada have been very well received by the municipalities because they were in such a deficit position from the standpoint of infrastructure and the need for infrastructure investment. Now they have that investment and they thank us for it, because they were ignored by the previous government and often the provincial government.

In Manitoba the provincial NDP has not stepped up and put in its share of the dollars to ensure that infrastructure investments happen. They thank the federal government for stepping forward and bringing in the building Canada fund, increasing the federal-provincial-territorial base infrastructure program, bringing economic stimulus dollars and even the community adjustment fund so that they are able to access dollars and make significant investments.

In the province of Manitoba the NDP government is thankful for this budget. It is really pleased that we have been able to increase transfers for health care. The total budget for health care is almost a billion dollars in Manitoba. It is up significantly, up by almost 30% from where the Liberals were. We have also seen an increase in investments and in transfers for social assistance and infrastructure to the provinces.

Overall in the Manitoba budget, \$3.4 billion comes from federal transfers. Almost 40% of its entire budget is coming through transfers. The provincial NDP in Manitoba thanks Canada's Conservative government for ensuring that it will have those investments.

One of the things I am quite pleased to see in this budget is that we are doing away with political subsidies. Over the last number of years in this House we have heard a lot of name-calling and braying. We have heard people complain about dollars used for partisan purposes. Nothing is more partisan than giving taxpayer dollars to fund political operations and political mechanisms within parties across this country, and funding organizations like the Bloc Québécois, which used Canadian taxpayers' dollars to advance its separatist cause.

That is just ridiculous. I hear about it all the time. When I was campaigning, my constituents were asking over and over again why we were giving money to a political party that wanted to completely ruin Canada.

It is a great budget.

I know my time is up. I look forward to answering questions another day.

● (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Selkirk—Interlake will have five minutes remaining for questions and comments the next time the House considers this issue for debate.

It being 6:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Medicine Hat.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TAX FREEDOM DAY

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the voters of Calgary West for electing me to my sixth term in the House of Commons. It is a great honour and privilege to continue to serve them in this capacity.

Earlier this week, the Fraser Institute proclaimed tax freedom day. This is the day when the average Canadian family has earned enough money to pay all of their taxes.

This year tax freedom day fell on June 6. This is a significant improvement from 2000 when it fell on June 24. With this stable and reliable majority federal government, I hope to move closer to Alberta's tax freedom day of May 18 or, even better, the 1961 record of May 3.

With the help of my colleagues in this majority government, I hope we can continue to move tax freedom day significantly earlier. Let us have more freedom through less government.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the voters of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for placing their trust in me on May 2. I plan to work hard in the coming months to ensure that families in my region are well represented here in Parliament.

The people of my riding are worried about the announcement made by Nova Bus, which is going to lay off 135 workers from its plant in Saint-Eustache. I was very disappointed to learn that 200 buses intended for the Canadian market will be assembled in its plant in the United States.

I promise to do everything I can to ensure that our tax dollars will be used to help families and create jobs here in Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

DON VALLEY WEST

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise for the first time in this auspicious House, I am compelled to remember my roots as eighth generation Irish who came to this fledgling nation in 1848 seeking relief from famine, poverty and hopelessness.

Here I am today, sent by the great Canadians of Don Valley West, sent by the residents of Canada's great city Toronto, the "meeting place", and I pledge to honour their trust.

First, I thank God for this opportunity of service. I humbly thank all the people of Don Valley West, all my volunteers during the recent election, my wife and children who have encouraged and supported me through my journey to Ottawa.

Most especially, I want to give my thanks and appreciation for the brave and valiant Canadians who have given their all for this great nation. I pledge to honour their sacrifices by my service in the House.

* * *

MICROCREDIT PROGRAMS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today the House of Commons unanimously passed my motion encouraging the government to increase funding for microcredit programs.

[*Translation*]

I have seen microcredit in action first-hand, and I can say that these programs are producing real results all over the world. These programs help the world's most disadvantaged people. Of course I was very disappointed that the budget presented this week does not contain a single new initiative on microcredit.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

I am disappointed, but not surprised. The government has shown a lack of concern for people with low income, whether we are talking about tax credits for children taking music lessons here at home or whether we are talking about the poorest of the poor who depend on microcredit around the world.

Indifference to those less fortunate, whether at home or abroad, that is the common thread running through the government.

* * *

CYPRESS HILLS—GRASSLANDS

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 10 and a half years go by very quickly. I am proud to be back again with the support of so many good citizens of Cypress Hills—Grasslands. They eagerly expect good solid leadership as we carry through on long time commitments.

The long gun registry, that thorn in the side of westerners, will be revoked. The taxpayers' subsidization of political parties will be reduced. Farmers will actually be able to make their own business decisions. This is why I came to Ottawa.

It was not that long ago that I went to my business partners, my sister and her husband Wendy and Wendell Patzer, to see what they thought of me running for election. They were supportive, so we went ahead.

Over the years my mother has questioned me as to why I am doing this, especially after some particularly biting letter to the editor, but through it all she keeps praying for us. Sheila has been my heart for almost 30 years.

Volunteers have helped us election after election after election. My exceptional staff has reached out to so many constituents so effectively.

Once again, I thank my constituents of Cypress Hills—Grasslands for the privilege of representing them here in this great institution.

* * *

*[Translation]***VISAS**

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take advantage of my first speech in the House to thank all the people in Laval—Les Îles who voted for me and all the volunteers who worked for me, and to congratulate all my colleagues on their election. Let me add that I am proud to be part of the great NDP family and that I will do everything I can to help families in my riding.

I rise in the House of Commons today to tell the Conservative government that it is high time to relax the laws on obtaining visitor visas. In my riding, as in many others in Canada, families cannot come together for weddings or funerals of loved ones because of the challenges involved in getting a visitor visa.

● (1410)

*[English]***POWELL RIVER**

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the people of Powell River and all others in the magnificent riding that I represent.

Maclean's magazine recently honoured Catalyst Paper Corporation of Powell River as one of Canada's 50 most socially responsible companies and *Corporate Knights* magazine named Catalyst one of Canada's 20 best corporate citizens.

I am honoured to have been re-elected to represent the great riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. There we will find some of Canada's most innovative and hard-working people whose efforts benefit not only our community, but also those of Canadians across the nation.

I would also like to salute the city of Powell River, which yesterday received the prestigious 2011 Willis Award for Innovation for its pioneering partnership with Catalyst.

In this global economic crisis, Powell River has worked closely with Catalyst, easing the company's taxes and keeping Canadians at work.

The people of Powell River and Catalyst exemplify the winning spirit of Canadian entrepreneurs. It is Canadians like them who have made our economic action plan a world-leading success.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I rise in the House, I would like to thank the constituents of Etobicoke—Lakeshore for having placed their trust in me.

[Translation]

I also want to congratulate you on your election. You are a breath of fresh air for the House.

I rise today to speak to an important measure announced by my colleague, the finance minister, when he brought down the budget on Monday. Our government is giving small businesses a hiring credit of up to \$1,000. More than half a million businesses will be able to benefit from this credit. That is a concrete measure to help create jobs across the country.

Our government is a firm believer that small businesses drive our economy and we will always support them.

* * *

*[English]***CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT**

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured and humbled by the confidence shown in me by the voters of Scarborough Southwest by electing me as their representative in the House of Commons.

In stark contrast to the Conservative government, I intend to represent all the people of Scarborough Southwest. I intend to use my time in this chamber to pressure the government to work for all Canadians struggling to make ends meet and to live with security and dignity.

The Conservatives have missed a chance to work for all Canadians, including the millions who did not vote for them. They have missed the opportunity to make life more affordable, to lift seniors out of poverty and provide new Canadians with adequate settlement services.

The intense personal stories I have heard from my constituents will motivate me in my work as their MP. Voters in Scarborough Southwest voted for change, and I intend to voice that message at every opportunity.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is standing up for Canadian workers. Today, the Minister of Industry highlighted opportunities that lie ahead for the automotive industry.

Canada's economic action plan has helped create and maintain jobs and has helped firms modernize their operations. We will continue to strengthen our industries, such as auto parts manufacturing, with our low tax plan to protect the economy, continued deductions for modernizing plants and facilities and incentives for hiring new workers.

Our government is working with President Obama and his administration to deliver on the shared vision for perimeter security and economic competitiveness. We anticipate these new long-term partnerships will accelerate the legitimate flow of people and goods, while strengthening security and economic competitiveness.

With the restructuring of two of our key auto manufacturers and the worst of the recession behind us, the automotive industry is looking to the future. Now is the time to seize the opportunities that come with this upward momentum.

[Translation]

PLAISANCE HERITAGE CENTRE

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House to represent the people of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. First, I would like to thank them for placing their trust in me in the recent election.

As I speak for the first time in the House, I would like to point out the exceptional work of the North Nation Mills Corporation's workers and volunteers, who are preparing for the new tourist season at the Plaisance Heritage Centre and Plaisance Falls. Their goal is to showcase the history of this village and its neighbouring communities. The Plaisance Heritage Centre helps keep the origins and the development of the Petite-Nation area alive in our memories.

Statements by Members

Such initiatives contribute to the development and vitality of our villages and, therefore, I am proud to recognize the exceptional work done by all those involved.

We wish them much success in 2011.

● (1415)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that our Conservative government is committed to expanding free trade because it creates new jobs and economic growth for hard-working Canadians. That is what we said during the campaign and that is what we are going to deliver.

We understand, as most Canadians do, that international trade is fundamentally a kitchen table issue. Almost 60% of our annual GDP and one in four Canadian jobs is directly or indirectly dependent on our exports.

Today the new NDP international trade critic is quoted as saying: "I don't accept that the NDP is opposed to trade deals."

I think the record is clear. Our party is for creating jobs through free trade while the NDP has not supported a single free trade agreement.

New jobs and economic growth to benefit Canadians continues to be our focus. We ask the opposition parties to work with us to strengthen and build trade opportunities that will be crucial to Canada's long-term economic success.

HOCKEY

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NHL will be returning to Manitoba as the hopes and dreams of thousands were realized on May 31 when it was announced that the Atlanta Thrashers would be relocated to Winnipeg.

There was a request that the team pre-sell 13,000 season tickets by June 20. After some initial ticket offers to Manitoba hockey fans, the season tickets went on sale to the public on June 4 at 12:00 noon and 17 minutes later they were all gone. A waiting list of 8,000 with a \$50 deposit has now been fulfilled.

I am proud to call Winnipeg my home. In my opinion it is the home of the greatest hockey fans in the world. Like most, I want our team to be called the Winnipeg Jets and I look forward to watching my team compete for the Stanley Cup.

I look forward to being a part of the whiteouts, and some of the loudest and most energized crowds that the NHL will ever have.

Go Jets go.

*Oral Questions***SYRIA**

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains gravely concerned about the situation in Syria, and the ongoing use of violence and torture against innocent people. Syria's blatant violations of its own human rights obligations threaten the security of the Middle East, a region which is undergoing important transition.

On May 24, our government took concrete actions against Syria, including various sanctions and imposing a freeze on the assets of those associated with the violent regime. Furthermore, Canada has called in the Syrian chargé d'affaires to raise our concerns and to once again call on Syria to cease the use of force against peaceful demonstrations.

The actions this weekend in the Golan demonstrate a regime that is becoming more isolated and desperate. It is an attempt to distract both domestically and internationally from its own failures and shortcomings, and Israel has every right to defend itself.

Today we hear that Britain and France will be bringing forward a resolution to the United Nations Security Council condemning the repression, and demanding accountability and action.

We will continue to work with our allies in the hopes that the regime will change its ways and end its brutal assault against the Syrian people.

* * *

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark World Oceans Day, an international day to observe the challenges facing our oceans, and to celebrate and encourage conservation. This year's theme is "Youth: The Next Wave for Change".

We know that young people care about the environment and are concerned for the future. The theme is intended to inspire young people to take action on environmental issues to effect lasting change.

Our oceans face serious risks. Climate change, pollution and overfishing have wreaked havoc on our oceans. The time to act is now.

Canada is lagging well behind in our duty to protect our ocean ecosystems. If we are to fulfill our 2012 commitment, we must dramatically increase the number of marine protected areas on all three coasts. We must also work to lower our emissions and use science-based conservation measures.

I encourage all members of the House to participate in World Oceans Day.

* * *

BETTY ALBRECHT

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my thanks to the citizens of Kitchener—Conestoga for once again entrusting me with the privilege of serving as their representative and for entrusting our party with a stable, national, majority Conservative government.

As members know, on election night my wife, Betty, collapsed to pass away days later. Since then literally thousands of Canadians have reached out, offering prayers, compassion and solace. I thank them.

I thank my colleagues in this House for their support. While this House is sometimes known for a lack of decorum and civility, that image is a stark contrast to the genuine warmth and affection I have felt from my colleagues from all parties through these difficult days.

Betty and I were united as a team in all of our endeavours and Betty was my constant source of encouragement. I thank God for Betty's love and for giving us 39 joyous years of marriage, three fantastic children, Gavin, Benj and Arja, their spouses, and my nine grandchildren of whom I could not be more proud.

They share not only in my sorrow but also in the gratitude I extend to all members today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tax breaks for big corporations are costing us a lot of money. The government claims otherwise but the facts show that the results expected from such an investment have not been achieved. Large corporations are reinvesting only a small fraction of these big government handouts and are pocketing the rest.

Where is the job creation? Why is the Prime Minister pursuing this strategy, which is ineffective and yet so costly?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the recession, the Canadian economy has created over 500,000 jobs. That is one of the most impressive track records in the industrialized countries. For this reason, we are rejecting the NDP's proposals to raise taxes.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at a concrete example. Last year, the Prime Minister gave a gift of over \$100 million to Esso Imperial Oil, a company that made over \$2 billion in profit. It does not need help. Why then is it being offered such a gift?

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many new jobs Esso Imperial Oil created with this gift of \$100 million? Where are the results? Where are the jobs?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in comparison to the other industrialized countries, the Canadian economy has one of the most impressive track records in terms of job creation. That is why we will continue to keep our taxes low, not only for big businesses but also for small and medium-sized businesses and for everyone. It is essential that we avoid the tax hikes proposed by the NDP.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one would think the Prime Minister would want to know how many jobs were created if he just gave \$100 million to a large corporation. One would think he would want to know that Canadians do.

He refuses to bring in a job creation strategy. In fact, what we are presented with in the budget is a job reduction strategy and Canadians want to know what jobs, what services, what programs will his government cut.

My question is, will the Prime Minister commit today not to cut services that are key to Canadian families? They are counting on these services.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we will not cut such services, but at the same time what we will not do to Canadian families is raise taxes, as the NDP proposes.

It is due in part to this government's reduction of taxes across the board many years ago, when we first took office, that the Canadian economy has one of the strongest job creation records anywhere in the industrialized world.

More than half a million jobs were created since the recession. That is the kind of policy we want to keep moving forward and that is why Canadians gave us a strong mandate.

• (1425)

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are plenty of places that the government should be looking for cuts, but it is not. For example, subsidies to profitable oil companies is a start, cracking down on tax havens is another measure that could be taken, or ending corporate tax giveaways.

Instead, we have cuts to environment, to fisheries, to defence, to the National Gallery. It speaks to the government's priorities: the corporate fat cats get the gold and Canadians get the coal.

I am asking simply, what other cuts does the Prime Minister have up his sleeve? What else are we going to hear about in days to come with regard to services that Canadians count on? Tell us a little more about—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, this government has funded very well the essential services of Canadians and will continue to do so.

In terms of tax policy, there are a number of measures in the budget to make sure that everybody pays their fair share of taxes. I would encourage the leader of the NDP and his caucus to actually read the budget on those matters before deciding to vote against it.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was actually a short read because the changes were highlighted in blue. I read through it in about 30 minutes.

We have seen this something for nothing approach before. Should we be surprised? The former parliamentary secretary for national defence said that he hoped there would be higher unemployment because that would make it easier to bring on people for the army.

Oral Questions

Would the Prime Minister tell us whether he agrees with such an insult to the 1.4 million unemployed Canadians? Would he set the record straight that he does not accept higher unemployment so that more people can be recruited to our armed services?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the many strong job creations in this budget is a measure called helmets to hardhats, specifically to help former members of the Canadian military find job opportunities in the workforce. I would encourage the leader of the NDP to take his blinders off to vote for these kinds of positive measures, instead of voting against veterans of the Canadian army.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Just a few short weeks ago, the premier of Ontario, Mr. McGuinty, made a major speech to the people of Ontario about the state of health care and his concerns about the future of the health care accord with the federal government. Premier McGuinty asked particularly that the Prime Minister begin now the negotiations with the provinces about the renewal of the health accord. I have not heard from the Prime Minister about that.

I wonder if the Prime Minister could tell the House what he intends to do to bring the provinces together to improve health care in Canada.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the health accord comes up for renewal in 2014. That is not this year or next year or even the year after that. However, I do look forward to discussing this matter with the premier of Ontario in the future, whomever that may be.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the future starts now. Premier McGuinty is not the only one calling on the federal government to take a positive approach. All of the provinces want to see a different attitude from the federal government when it comes to health and consulting with the provinces in general.

Why is the government intent on maintaining this unilateral federalism that does not benefit all of Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party is talking about our approach to federalism. When the Liberals were in power, they cut health transfers to the provinces by 30%. Under our government, health transfers have increased by over 30%. That is the Conservative difference.

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the recent report of the Health Council of Canada cites lack of federal leadership for the failure to establish a national pharmaceutical strategy, which is a key goal of the 2004 health accord. Yet the budget makes no mention of this critical program.

The success of the health accord depends on collaboration between the federal and provincial governments.

Oral Questions

Will the minister stop passing the buck to the provinces and tell this house what her government will do to establish a pharmaceutical strategy?

● (1430)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of affordable access to drugs as part of a quality health care system, and we work with the provinces and territories, who are responsible, by the way, for deciding which drugs are publicly covered.

That is why we have consistently increased transfers to the provinces and territories by over 30% since we formed government, so they can continue to meet the health care needs of their residents.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his latest budget, the Minister of Finance told Canadians to expect \$17 billion in cuts. The problem is that he did not bother to tell us what specific areas will be affected by these cuts. Now people are worried, and rightfully so, that they will lose services and programs that are important to them.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us where the cuts will be made? Can he promise Canadians that the programs and services they rely on will not be cut?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member has an opportunity, he should read pages 182 and 183 of the budget document that was tabled on Monday, which outline the process for the strategic and operating review, looking at the operating expenses of government and the Government of Canada, a large organization.

A review of the operating expenses has not been done in more than 15 years. It is high time it was accomplished in order to cut out some of the fat and unnecessary spending in government.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people have the right to know where these cuts will be made, particularly if their safety and well-being will be affected.

We learned yesterday that cuts have already been made to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. What next? Food safety, public health, airport security?

People have cause to be worried.

Can the minister assure us that none of the other cuts will affect the safety and well-being of Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the process to be undertaken will commence soon. Chaired by my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, a special committee of cabinet will do a careful review. The committee will not slash and burn, as the Liberal government did in 1995-96 with the provinces, the territories and individuals in Canada. We will maintain the

transfer payments to the provinces and territories. We will maintain the transfer payments to individuals in Canada, to seniors, to persons with disabilities. However, we will look carefully at the cost of delivering government services and productivity in government at the operating—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night, while people around the world prepared for World Oceans Day, Canadians learned that their government was planning to slash funding for the protection and conservation of fisheries and oceans. These cuts ignore our responsibility to protect the world's longest coastline. Has the government forgotten when our fisheries were brought to the brink of disaster?

Will the minister see reason and commit to cancelling the planned cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a strategic review is an opportunity for the department to assess the performance of all of its programs. It also allows us to ensure that we are responding to the priorities of Canadians and the strong mandate that Canadians gave us. We have a responsibility to taxpayers to spend their money prudently and where it will do the most good. We must ensure that government programs are efficient, effective and achieving the expected results for Canadians. We believe that DFO is at a critical period in developing its programs and policies to meet the needs of the new fisheries and oceans management for today and the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is making decisions that will compromise the safety of Quebecers. We have learned that the government will be closing maritime search and rescue centres in Quebec in order to centralize operations in Halifax. And it is all in the name of saving money instead of saving lives.

Does the minister realize that these services that protect the public are more effective when they are provided in the region where they are needed?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we received a strong mandate from Canadians to implement our budget proposals and deficit reduction measures. The decision to close the call centre will save taxpayer dollars without impacting the safety of people while, at the same time, still providing bilingual services. New communications technologies exist that now permit search and rescue call centre employees to provide the same high-quality service from a central call centre. Existing search and rescue helicopters and vessels will remain where they are currently based.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said last February that Newfoundlanders should look after themselves when it came to search and rescue, Canadians were shocked. No one realized that this would actually become Conservative government policy.

Closing the maritime rescue sub-centre in St. John's will endanger people's lives. Will the minister commit to reversing this dangerous decision and show he is serious about the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, safety is a primary issue when it comes to Canadians and all of the services that we provide. This call centre reduction will in no way impact the safety of Canadians and, at the same time, will provide efficiencies as well as savings of Canadian taxpayers' money.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not a call centre. The St. John's maritime rescue coordination centre handles over 500 incidents a year, involving almost 3,000 people at risk. It depends on local knowledge to save 600 lives each year.

The government has decided to spend billions on corporate tax giveaways. To pay for it, it seems willing to endanger the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Will the government agree right now to reverse this most shameful decision?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, there is no way that we would make a decision that would have an impact on the safety of any Canadian.

Existing search and rescue resources, including helicopters and vessels, will remain where they are currently based. The call centre function can be provided from a central location, saving dollars as we exercise our commitment to Canadians to reduce our deficit.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a report by the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff reveals that the government is considering reducing the number of contractors and reservists by 5% annually. During the recent campaign, the NDP

Oral Questions

committed to maintaining the National Defence budget in all regions, including mine, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

Can the Conservatives do this and still assure Canadian Forces members and civilian staff in Bagotville that they will not be affected by these cuts?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I would like to remind the House of this government's record: over the past five years, the defence budget was increased by at least \$1 billion a year, and reservists and civilian staff are included in that budget.

Of course, there will be operational cuts in this year's budget, but that growth and those increases remain part of this government's record and we are very proud of it.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is also about the government's threat to cut defence jobs across the country.

In my riding, there are more than 6,000 regular and reserve officers and more than 2,500 civilians who serve our country every day at CFB Esquimalt. This base contributes over \$600 million a year to our regional economy.

Will the government commit today to stopping these defence cuts that are creating so much uncertainty in my community? Will the government assure the House that no cuts will be made that would affect the operations of our six coastal defence vessels based at Esquimalt?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's record on national defence speaks for itself. On average, the budget for this important department has risen by \$1 billion every year since 2006.

Obviously, just as Canadians are tightening their belts with regard to the situation this country faced in the global downturn, and as this government moves to achieve operational efficiencies, there will be a strategic review of some costs in National Defence and they will be reported to the House in due course.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nearly 7,000 civilian and military personnel at CFB Valcartier want to know if the Conservatives plan to cut their budget. While several regions of Canada desperately need help from our soldiers, particularly to deal with natural disasters, the soldiers themselves are dealing with limited human and material resources.

How can the government even consider more cuts? Can the Minister of National Defence assure the people of my region that there will be no cuts to CFB Valcartier?

Oral Questions

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, in the context of the strategic review of government spending, of course there will be cuts to the National Defence operating budget.

However, for this important department, the facts speak for themselves: an additional \$1 billion in spending every year since 2006 is the most important part of this government's record when it comes to National Defence.

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CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Champlain Bridge problem deserves to be taken seriously. The bridge is regularly partially closed and as a result Quebecers spend more time on the road, arrive late for work and lose precious time with their families. It is a veritable nightmare. This situation is wasting Quebecers' time and money. In the Conservative budget, replacing the Champlain Bridge was totally ignored.

Will this government stand up for Quebecers once and for all? Can the minister immediately commit to providing the necessary funding for replacing the Champlain Bridge?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. He has been a member of Parliament for the Montreal area for many years. In fact, the Liberals were in government for many years and could have started the work.

We have started the work. We have invested several million dollars to repair the bridge and to continue to ensure the safety of the bridge. In this week's budget, we announced \$228 million for continuing the work. What is more, all the options are on the table.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The government announced a \$57 million cut to DFO and the loss of 275 jobs. The fishing industry, which does so much to drive the economy of Canada's Atlantic and Pacific coastal communities, deserves to know the details. These cuts will hurt economically, will diminish research capacity and will pose a safety issue.

Will the government be up front and provide the details on these massive cuts?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, a strategic review was an opportunity for the department to assess the performance of all of its programs. This also allows us to ensure that we are responding to the priorities of Canadians. We have a responsibility to do that and a mandate to do that from Canadians. We must ensure the government programs are efficient, effective and achieving the expected results for Canadians.

We believe that DFO is at a critical juncture.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have just heard, the media reports now confirm that the Conservative government is closing down the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am absolutely shocked at what I just heard in QP. The minister just said, "No way will it impact safety. Efficiencies will be achieved through closing this call centre". I have never heard a distress centre being called a call centre in my life. Nobody has. Achieving efficiencies was in the budget.

Could the minister please show us in this budget, where that—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, new communications technologies exist that now permit search and rescue call centre employees to provide the same high-quality service from a central position.

We have an obligation to Canadians. It was clear, and we will go forward with our obligations to provide cost-saving measures that will protect Canadian investments.

* * *

● (1445)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fight for a climate change plan in Canada has an unlikely ally, the loyal executives at Suncor. They agree that the government's piecemeal approach to regulating emissions is expensive and ineffective.

The government has always had an open door policy for oil executives. Will the minister now commit to dropping his expensive and ineffective approach and introduce a legally binding plan to combat emissions?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that my colleague is expressing concern for a fine Alberta industry that creates so many jobs and generates such great wealth for the Canadian economy.

As my colleague knows full well, we have a plan and the plan is working. We addressed transportation emissions first. We moved on to the coal-fired electricity generating sector, and we are about to begin consultations with other heavy emitters, including the oil and gas sector.

Oral Questions

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not understand that its plan is a failure. Canada is far from meeting its international commitments on climate change. In fact, Canada will not even meet its own targets. And to think that most federal greenhouse gas reduction programs will end in 2012.

When will we have a long-term plan to fight climate change?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true.

[English]

We have a plan and that plan is working. Indeed, the emissions are getting heavier. What we will do to deal with that is to decouple the increase in emissions from the productivity and profitability of the various resource generation sectors.

We have a plan. We are a quarter of our way toward achieving our 2020 goals. We will meet those targets.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States Environmental Protection Agency has rejected the Keystone XL pipeline study and considers it to be, and I quote, “inadequate”. Close to one million more barrels of crude oil will be transported by this pipeline. According to the agency, this will increase greenhouse gas emissions associated with the oil sands.

Can the minister confirm these facts and provide any studies on greenhouse gas emissions and the Keystone pipeline?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board is a strong independent regulator that ensures pipeline safety. It is mandated to ensure the safety and the security of pipelines from when they are first proposed until they are abandoned.

Canada and the U.S. trade oil, natural gas and electricity across our borders every day. The Keystone XL pipeline will provide a substantial economic benefit to Canada.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government just does not get it. Canada has lost its credibility. The U.S.A. is doing more due diligence on greenhouse gases from Canada's oil sands than the Canadian government has done in five years.

Instead of hiring PR teams to give a good name to the oil sands abroad, will the government regulate absolute reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the oil sands?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a mixed question with a couple of subjects there.

While the opposition continues to bash Canada abroad and here in terms of the way we handle energy, our government will continue to defend the Canadian economy, continue to defend Canadian resources and continue to defend Canadian jobs, and we will not apologize for it.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks World Oceans Day, a time when we recognize the importance of maintaining the health of a marine environment and its resources. The Conservative government takes this issue very seriously. We are committed to the preservation of Canada's fragile ocean environment.

Would the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans please inform this House about recent progress to advance this effort?

● (1450)

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley on his recent re-election.

Healthy oceans and their role in the economic and social life for our country are critically important. This is why earlier today I was pleased to announce three new candidate marine protected areas on the east coast and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, as well as a strategy for protecting the important corals and sponge reefs on our Pacific coast.

Today's announcements complement the eight marine areas which the government has protected since 2006, as well as our investments in science, the Coast Guard and sustainable fisheries.

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FLOODING IN MONTRÉGIE

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's plan to help the residents of the Montérégie region in dealing with the flooding has been, in a word, pathetic.

After withdrawing the troops on the eve of floods becoming worse, the public safety minister said in a letter that the army could not stay there for the cleanup because, and get this, it would be unfair competition for the private sector.

Will the government finally accept Quebec's request to have troops assist volunteers and residents to clean up from this historic disaster?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Forces are on the ground within 24 hours of each provincial request. Over 800 soldiers, sailors and air personnel have helped with dyke reinforcement, sandbagging, protection of infrastructure and houses, maintenance of the central roads and evacuations of civilians from flood ravaged areas.

The Canadian Forces have worked side-by-side with the provincial authorities during these crises to protect our citizens, property and infrastructure. The Canadian Forces are always ready to step in in response to emergencies.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, thousands of Quebecers will converge on Saint-Jean to help the disaster victims. This solidarity was also part of what we experienced during the Saguenay floods and the ice storm. Unfortunately, it is not shared by the Conservative government, even though it is responsible for representing all Canadians, including Quebecers who voted for the NDP.

Will the government stand in solidarity with the disaster victims and allow Canadian troops to help with the cleanup?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Forces will remain in these regions during these emergencies to assist civil authorities until their unique capabilities are no longer required.

Every member of the House should be proud of the outstanding job the Canadian Forces have done in Quebec, in Manitoba and, most recently, in Saskatchewan to protect Canadians in danger.

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TAX HARMONIZATION

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite Conservatives claiming that the HST would be good for the people of British Columbia, an independent panel commissioned by the B.C. government revealed that families will pay an average of \$350 more in sales tax under the HST, and the promised cost reductions for businesses have yet to be realized.

Could the minister explain to the House if he still thinks the tax is good for the people of British Columbia?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member opposite realizes, provincial sales tax is a matter of provincial responsibility. It is not a matter of federal responsibility. It is a decision for the Government of British Columbia and the people of British Columbia, as it has been in the past in Ontario and in the provinces in Atlantic Canada that chose to harmonize over time. This is not a decision for the Government of Canada.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government just does not get it. Raising taxes on B.C. families took away any bragging rights the Conservatives may have had on tax relief. Even Premier Clark acknowledges that the HST is hurting B.C. families.

Facing an unprecedented referendum on getting rid of the HST, the B.C. government is now promising changes. However, the fact remains that the HST is a tax shift from companies on to working families.

Will the Conservatives—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Not only does the government get it, Mr. Speaker, but the voters of Canada got it on May 2, based on a very strong mandate. The voters of Canada made a choice between a high tax plan and big spending programs of the NDP, and a low tax plan, jobs, growth, creative Canada, education,

skills training and encouraging small business and larger businesses in Canada to create jobs.

It is a strong mandate from the people of Canada. They made their choice.

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● (1455)

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister has again stated that he will ignore the Wheat Board Act, refuse to hold a plebiscite giving wheat and barley farmers a vote on their livelihood and will unilaterally abolish the Wheat Board.

Forming government with the support of only 24% of Canadians eligible to vote does not constitute the plebiscite set out in the act.

Why does he refuse to ask the very people who will be devastated by his decision if they support the Wheat Board's demise? What is the minister afraid of? Why does he plan to ignore the law?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, western Canadian farmers gave us a strong mandate to move forward in this direction. I cannot understand why the member for Guelph would deny western Canadian farmers the same options, responsibilities and privileges that his farmers enjoy.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers in Ontario have the right to vote.

After four years of study, a federal rail service review reported last October that shippers of grain, forest products and other commodities are getting seriously inferior services. The problem is an imbalance in market power, which strongly favours the railways.

After a further delay of six months, the government agreed last March to correct that imbalance. It only takes a simple amendment to the Canada Transportation Act but the throne speech was oddly silent on that issue.

Will the government commit unequivocally to enact that new legislation before the end of this calendar year?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are currently working on moving ahead with these recommendations. The safety of all transportation in the country is a major priority for our government and, as usual, we will deliver the goods.

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than five weeks ago a pipeline spilled 28,000 barrels of crude oil on lands claimed by the Lubicon first nation. This massive spill poses a risk to its health and water supply. By cabinet directive, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development must help first nations facing such emergencies. Chief Noskey has requested federal support for independent expertise on damage assessment and remediation.

Can the minister explain what action he is taking to protect the health and interests of the Lubicon first nation?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously our departmental officials have been in contact with and working with the leadership of the Lubicon first nation. I would also like to point out that we have done much in the way of water and water regulations. We have done most of that work through working with the Alberta treaty first nations and we will continue to do so.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie River Basin is home to countless first nations and Métis communities. They rely on the basin for sustenance and transport. Both the Northwest Territories government and the Dene Nation have raised concerns about transboundary impacts of this spill and of oil sands developments in the basin.

As the government is mandated to guard the rights and interests of aboriginal peoples and to address transboundary impacts, when can we finally expect to see federal leadership on the Mackenzie River Basin Agreement?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the critic in the NDP. I did not welcome her and I look forward to our upcoming meeting.

The progress on that initiative is going forward. I have had contact and an early briefing on that. I would like to continue the dialogue with the member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

HEALTH

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mental health is shaped from the earliest days of life and is influenced by many underlying factors in a child's environment. Would the hon. Minister of Health please inform the House how our government is helping equip children with the ability to deal with difficult situations and improve their social relations, problem-solving skills and academic performance?

● (1500)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Barrie for all of his good work on the mental health issue.

On behalf of the hon. Minister of Health, I am pleased to inform the House today that our government announced a significant investment to support a mental health project for school-aged children. Today's funding announcement will go toward improving

Oral Questions

the emotional and social health of children aged 6 to 12 years of age, as well as parents, teachers and community partners located in 25 schools in Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Alberta.

This project is part of our government's investment to understand what works best to promote positive mental health among vulnerable populations across Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I used to work with small businesses who helped people save energy and money in their homes. They would be disappointed by the non-answer given Tuesday in response to a question about the eco-energy retrofit program for homes. Here is a program the government cut and brought back and cut and brought back. People cannot run small businesses that way.

Since the Conservatives claim to care so much about stability, why do they not stay true to their words and help small businesses by committing to make this program stable for five years instead of just one year?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the \$10 billion investment that our government has invested in clean energy and a cleaner environment. We are proud of the eco-energy program. It is helping thousands of homeowners across the country make their homes more efficient and it has helped small businesses across the country as well.

We are very proud of the significant investments that we continue to make in clean energy, which is supporting renewable energy development across this country.

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Champlain Bridge is an infrastructure that is vital to Quebec's economy. Experts found that there is an urgent need to replace it and to include a sustainable transportation system for the future. Yet nothing is being done. There is no money in the budget for this and there is no plan. Everyone is wondering when the needs of the south shore will be met.

When will the government finally announce the construction of a new bridge that includes sustainable transportation, such as a light rail system?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is well aware of the importance of this file to the greater Montreal area.

First, I will ask the hon. member to carefully reread the budget. In fact, \$228 million has been allocated for bridges in the Montreal area. So, if the future of the Champlain Bridge is so important to him, he should vote in favour of the budget.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today politicians of the European Union passed a motion calling on Canada to drop the World Trade Organization challenge against their unfair and improper ban on Canadian seal products. We also know our challenge at the WTO regarding seal products is about protecting and advancing the financial security of Canadians.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade please tell the House if Canada intends to back down on this challenge?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, allow me to congratulate the member for Kildonan—St. Paul on her re-election to this House.

Canada's position on seals is a completely separate matter from ongoing negotiations with the European Union over our comprehensive economic trade agreement. Furthermore, the EU ban on virtually all Canadian seal products is inconsistent with the EU's international trade obligations. That is why the Canadian government has initiated the WTO dispute settlement process and we will be moving ahead with our WTO challenge.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a family in my riding is at risk of being deported in one week if the Minister of Immigration does not intervene. Four years ago, members of the Castillo Olivares family fled their home country of Mexico, where they were the victims of violence and their lives were being threatened. They have three children who have integrated well here, and the parents are employed.

In light of the urgency here, why is the minister refusing to use his discretionary power to allow them to remain in the country?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on her election.

Under the Privacy Act, the minister is not authorized to comment on specific cases. That said, we have an extremely fair process for asylum seekers that has a number of levels of appeal, including the ability to apply to become a permanent resident on humanitarian

grounds. I imagine that this family has gone through all of those steps, but our system must treat every case fairly, and that is what we are doing.

* * *

• (1505)

CANADA POST

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has rejected the union's latest offer to settle the dispute and as the pressure tactics continue, the government's silence on the matter is worrisome.

Does the minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation not realize that with his silence he is condoning the actions of Canada Post, when he should instead be sending a clear message that the government also expects a negotiated solution, which is the only way this public service might be enhanced, including in small communities?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed we have been there. We have had mediators at the table with the two parties encouraging them to resolve their dispute. Oftentimes the best results to these situations of dispute are found between the parties.

We are very frustrated that it is continuing on, so we have put more effort and emphasis on making sure that the parties themselves know the importance of this matter to the Canadian public.

I have met with the president of Canada Post and with the president of the union. We continue to encourage them to get a deal done.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel and accommodation deduction for tradespersons).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to reintroduce this bill on behalf of Canada's building and construction trades as well as their indentured apprentices for the third time since I was first elected.

The building and construction trades have been lobbying for this bill for over 30 years and it continues to be one of the key priorities at each and every one of their legislative conferences.

In every Parliament the government has made vague promises of progress to come, then each Parliament ends without concrete action. The time to rectify that situation is now.

The ask is simple: allow tradespersons and apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income so that they can secure and maintain employment at a construction site that is more than 80 kilometres away from their home.

Routine Proceedings

At a time when some regions of the country suffer from high unemployment while others suffer from temporary skilled labour shortages, this bill offers a solution to both. Best of all, it is revenue neutral for the government because the cost associated with the income tax cut is more than made up by the savings in employment insurance.

Now that the Conservatives have a majority in the House of Commons there are no more excuses. The government can and must support this bill and act unequivocally to support Canada's building and construction trades.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-202, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (death benefit).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to introduce a bill today that would address a longstanding grievance for widowed Canadians. In short, it would make the CPP death benefit tax-free.

As it stands now, receiving this benefit can have disastrous financial implications for the surviving spouse. Most obviously, of course, it reduces the amount of money available to cover funeral expenses. More importantly, however, it may push the survivor's income into a higher tax bracket thereby potentially having a negative impact on eligibility for social assistance or the GST/HST tax credit. At \$2,500 the CPP death benefit is already inadequate, but by making it a taxable benefit the government is adding insult to injury.

Instead of imposing a financial penalty on grieving spouses, I call on all members of the House to do the right thing, the fair thing and the compassionate thing by passing my bill at the earliest opportunity so that we can support families as they mourn the loss of their loved one.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-203, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (in-home care of relative).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reintroduce a bill that I brought forward in the last Parliament, which would make a profoundly positive difference for thousands of Canadians who are the primary caregivers for their spouses.

In many ways, my bill is a fitting complement to the government's enhanced family caregiver tax credit that was announced in its recent budget. Despite the newly increased amount, it still remains the case that spouses are excluded from receiving this benefit. Frankly, that is outrageous.

Every conceivable relative of a person living with disabilities can apply, including a child, grandchild, brother, sister, niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, parent or grandparent. Not included is the one person

who is most likely to provide care on an ongoing basis, the spouse. That is patently unfair and undervalues the caregiving that spouses provide every day of every week of every year.

A quarter of Canadians provide informal care to a family or friend with a serious health problem every year. More than 75% of these caregivers are women. The Canadian Caregivers Association estimates that caregivers contribute \$5 billion of unpaid labour per year to the health care system, which represents an enormous savings to federal and provincial governments.

Making spouses eligible for the caregiver amount is a small step forward. It would send a strong signal that the federal government recognizes the exceptional contribution that spouses make as caregivers and would provide a new support for them to help a loved one who is in need of care to live with dignity and as much independence as possible.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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● (1515)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGION OF NORTHERN ONTARIO ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-204, An Act establishing the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Region of Northern Ontario.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to table An Act establishing the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Region of Northern Ontario. This bill would deliver to northern Ontario an independent economic development agency free of political interference.

Every region in Canada has its own independent agency, including southern Ontario. Yet the government refuses to treat northern Ontarians equally. Under the act, 10 northern Ontario ridings would be serviced by this independent economic development agency.

I urge the government to take this bill and make it its own.

Routine Proceedings

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion: "That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on June 16, 2011, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, June 20, 2011. That, on Thursday, June 16, 2011, the hours of the sitting of the House and the order of business shall be as provided in the standing orders for a Friday, with the stipulation that any notices can be filed no later than 6:00 p.m."

The Speaker: Does the minister have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[English]

PETITIONS

CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from concerned citizens requesting that the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments immediately cease negotiations with the European Union, while nationwide public consultations can be held on how and whether to proceed with a potential trade agreement.

The petitioners believe the current free trade agreement being negotiated with the E.U. goes far beyond what is generally understood as trade with respect to procurement rights, local priorities, environmental regulations and water rights.

NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of students from the Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School in Caledon East in my riding asking for a publicly funded early-education national child care program.

CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to submit the following petition signed by several hundred Guelphites, urging the government to exclude all sub-federal governments and their public agencies, including municipalities, from any Canada-E.U. procurement agreement.

On May 2, 2009, Canada and the E.U. announced the beginning of the negotiations of a comprehensive economic and trade agreement, otherwise known as CETA. It is expected that an agreement will be reached in 2011-12.

As it stands, CETA negotiations include government procurement, including projects at the provincial and municipal levels.

Through losing the right to have independent procurement policies, municipalities like Guelph will lose the right to buy local materials and services, which is one of its most important tools for stimulating local innovation, fostering local community economic

development, creating local employment and achieving other valuable public policy goals.

REPUBLIC OF THE FIJI ISLANDS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition calling on the Government of Canada to establish a high commission in the Republic of the Fiji Islands. My office has received petitions with hundreds of signatures from Fijian Canadians all across the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

As the petitioners note, immigration business and other consular affairs originating in Fiji are now handled by the Canadian high commission in Sydney, Australia, causing delays and inefficient service. The impact of the situation on tourism, trade, economic co-operation and immigration are significant. There are more than 100,000 Canadians of Fijian descent who have very active travel, immigration business and property interests in both Canada and Fiji.

These individuals are calling on the government to establish a Canadian high commission in Fiji, as has already been done by the United States, Australia, New Zealand, China and India, to improve the delivery of government services for all Canadians and increase economic co-operation between Canada and Fiji.

● (1520)

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition put forward by literally thousands of Canadians who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known and that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial causes combined. Yet they point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world.

The petitioners point out, as well, that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, using our foreign missions and embassies for trade purposes and that teams of Department of Justice lawyers travel the world like globe-trotting propagandists for the asbestos industry.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms, to institute a just transition program for asbestos workers to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

*The Budget***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: The last time we were debating this motion, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake had five minutes left for questions and comments, so I will call questions and comments.

The hon. minister of western diversification.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the member expand on how good the economic action plan has been for Manitoba and for the Prairies? As western diversification minister, I understand that a lot of the jobs created were under the economic action plan phase one. Now that we are going into the second, would he like to elaborate on some of the plan?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your election as our Speaker. I am looking forward to working with you for the next four years.

The economic action plan has been a very well-received program in my riding. The municipalities were extremely happy to receive funding for much needed infrastructure investment. It helped trigger dollars out of the province's well, through the building Canada fund and through the community adjustment fund. We saw a lot of investment in a number of different projects right across the riding. Virtually hundreds of millions were invested in the riding, federally, provincially and municipally. That helped create jobs in the short term and provided us with infrastructure that we needed to sustain our productivity and our quality of life throughout rural Manitoba.

Also, the EI work-sharing program really helped some of our major companies, especially in the steel industry where it did see a major downturn with the recession. They were able to keep staff available and on-site through the work share. They were able to do a lot of different upgrades to the plants in my riding. Then, at the end, they were in a position to completely get back up to full steam in very short order because all their staff were still on-site, employed and were able to turn a key and get the plants operating again. That created a bunch of jobs and put economic wealth back into the riding.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could the member for Selkirk—Interlake, who I know very well, answer the question that the Prime Minister did not answer earlier about the \$100 million that was given in a former economic

action plan to Imperial Oil. It was \$100 million in corporate tax breaks.

The Leader of the Opposition asked this question, not once, not twice but three times and the Prime Minister was incapable of answering.

Hopefully the Conservatives have had some time to look into this. The question is very simple. The Conservatives spent \$100 million. Could they give us any one of the tangible benefits that came from that \$100 million of taxpayer money that the Conservatives gave away?

● (1525)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the question that comes back to the NDP is this. Why is the NDP not supporting budget 2011? It contains a lot of things for which the NDP asked. There is help for seniors. It may not be as much as what it has asked for, but there is help for seniors through the increase in the GIS.

The NDP has asked for more to be done for rural doctors and nurses. There is help in there for our rural doctors and nurses, but the NDP will vote against this budget.

The NDP wants to ensure we protect health care. Health care is protected in this budget by ensuring that equalization transfers and health care transfers continue to go out to the provinces at a rate increasing by 6% per year. In my province of Manitoba, that means that health care transfers are going to be over \$1 billion this year. That is up almost 30% from when the Liberals were in power.

There are things in there like the eco-energy retrofit program for which the NDP asked. It has been renewed. The NDP members asked for the helmets and hardhats program. We worked with them co-operatively and it is in there.

There is compromise on both sides. Therefore, why is the NDP not supporting this budget?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I am rising in the House since being back, and I would like to congratulate you on your election. I also thank the great people in the riding of Sudbury for putting me back in this place.

I used to sit a lot closer to my colleague, the member for Selkirk—Interlake, and we used to have a lot of conversations. Now we get to have this conversation from the opposite side of the House. It is interesting for both of us.

One of the things that you mentioned in your response to my hon. colleague for Burnaby—New Westminster is the budget addresses the doctor and nurse shortage in rural and northern communities. This side of the House thinks it does not go far enough.

The Budget

I believe the budget sets out a \$9 million in investment, but it does not do enough to actually create the doctors and nurses that we need, especially in northern Ontario and other rural parts. What you are doing is pulling doctors from larger urban centres and then hoping maybe they will—

The Speaker: Order, please. I have to stop the hon. member as there is not much time for a response. I will remind him to address his comments through the Chair and not directly at other members.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Sudbury for his re-election. I did enjoy sitting close to him when we sat at the other end of the House. We will still have lots of time for camaraderie in this place. We do enjoy each other's company.

What we are going to be doing for rural doctors and nurses, creating new opportunities in rural and northern Canada, is something that has not been tried before. Having a student loan forgiveness program of up to \$40,000 for doctors and \$20,000 for nurses and nurse practitioners is something we have not tried. It is a made-in-Canada solution, unlike what is happening right now. We were going all over the world trying to poach doctors, which is not sustainable.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is also my first opportunity to be on my feet in the 41st Parliament.

First, with great humility, I thank my constituents in Hamilton Centre for returning me for a fourth term to this honourable place and for the support that they have shown for so long, going on 26 years, in three orders of government. I am truly blessed and very appreciative of the trust and faith that my constituents have placed in me again.

As well, Mr. Speaker, may I also add my voice to those who wish to congratulate you on your ascension to the throne and the history books, being the youngest Speaker ever. I wish you the best of luck. If you have a great term, we will have a great term, and I do hope you have that great term.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the budget. However, I do not have much time and would like to confine my comments to the party subsidies that are now being withdrawn as a result of amendments to the budget that are now before us.

My overarching thought about this reminds me of a phrase my mom taught me when I was very young: "Penny-wise and pound foolish".

Penny-wise, there is \$27 million to be saved. That always sounds good, particularly to ordinary Canadians for whom \$27 million is an amount of money they can barely comprehend in their mind let alone the total budget that we have here.

It is understandable that at first blush the government is playing a populous card by saying to Canadians, "Well, why should your tax money go for those awful, horrible political parties? Let them go out and get the money from all their supporters. That is the way it ought to be and we ought to cut back on this. It will save you, taxpayer, \$27 million."

That is sort of the Coles Notes version of what the government is offering here and that is the penny-wise part. It sounds good to save \$27 million and it does not sound like there would be any pain.

However, the reason it is pound foolish is that it is weakening our democracy. Anything that weakens our democracy weakens the value of Canadian citizenship because, so much of it is predicated on the beautiful democracy that we have. It is a democracy that is held up by many in the world as an example of a mature, advanced and modern democracy. Yet, it is my experience that we are about to lose that.

Having that other place here as an appointed body is an albatross we all carry when we travel the world on behalf of Canada and talk about democracy. Eyes light up when people find out that we have an appointed Senate. What, in the great democracy of Canada? Therefore, we still have work to do, but this was an improvement that did make our democracy stronger.

I have believed every minute that I have been in politics that the further away we keep politicians from political money, the better our democracy is. Reversing the public financing takes us right back to that world where politicians find it necessary to be snuggling up to people and asking them for money, when perhaps the real and only reason is to deal with a policy issue. However, there is that thing in the back of their mind that they constantly have to be raising money in order to run a campaign. I am not getting into the horrible things money can and does do to a democracy, I am just talking about the above-board stuff.

We all know that it is only a question of time before the current limits are going to rise. The table is being set. I do not think it would happen right away, but it will happen over time as the government makes the case, "We need the ability to fund these expensive campaigns, costs are going up, and we do not have the public subsidy any more." Ergo, it makes sense to raise the donations.

● (1530)

I do not know about other members but in Hamilton Centre coughing up \$1,000 for a political contribution does not happen easily or very often for the simple reason that most of my constituents do not have \$1,000 to just write a cheque. They can do \$50 or \$100, and with enough like that, we can manage the campaign without me, as a member, an elected person, spending my valuable time going for money.

There was a study not long ago, and I stand to be corrected, but my memory tells me that U.S. senators in a six year term spent something like 40% or 50% of the time either planning, going to, being at, or returning from fundraisers all over the United States. Is that where we want to go? Is that the direction we want, that those with money more easily get the attention of hon. members? Again, I am talking about the honourable stuff, never mind how it starts to get us closer and closer to some of the bad stuff.

How many times in the history of democracy has money corrupted the process and individuals? Obviously, not everyone here will be corrupt, but it is taking us in the wrong direction, and that is our point, at a time when there is so much need for modern democracies, for mature democracies to be an example.

I have been on six or seven international election monitoring missions, trying to help emerging democracies. The ones I have been to are mostly in the former Soviet Bloc countries that are truly emerging democracies, struggling. They have so many questions about our system because they would like it.

One of the things they talk about is money and how we manage money in the political process. For them to find out that Canada, one of the great models, one of the great hopes, is going in this direction will be devastating for them because if we are not there, how will some of these emerging democracies ever get there themselves? How will that happen? That is part of our international role.

We are not the biggest economy in the world. We are certainly not the biggest military. We do not go throwing our weight around, but what we do have is a great reputation, or we had a great reputation and we are struggling to maintain it, notwithstanding current policy. That reputation is one that our predecessors in this place and Canadians generations before us built, earned and created for Canada. Now we are in the process of offering it away.

I need to split my time with the member for Nickel Belt, Mr. Speaker. There goes most of my speech, but that is okay, I think I made my point.

The fact remains that this is not a positive step. This is a retrograde step. This is taking us in exactly the opposition direction. I do not know when the political climate will be such that we will get it back, but I do know that our democracy is being weakened by this move. The ability of an idea, like a Tommy Douglas idea, to survive and be heard when now money is a bigger issue than before can only lessen the effectiveness of our democracy and, again, therefore the effectiveness of the citizenship that we are all so proud of having in this country.

We will not be supporting the budget and we certainly will not be supporting this. What we will be doing to modernize democracy is fighting to get rid of the Senate and bring in proportional representation. Now, that is a positive step in democracy.

• (1535)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because it is my first opportunity, let me thank the voters in Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission for the opportunity to be back here again.

The Budget

I listened with interest to the enthusiastic comments made by my colleague. He said the move to change the political subsidies weakens democracy. However, I do not think he made his case. He kept saying it, but he did not ever make his case as far as I could hear.

He talked about the ability to do what he does in his riding in Hamilton, which is to raise money to run his campaign, and he seemed able to do that without difficulty. I think all of us have met that challenge.

Would he not agree that these changes that are being suggested in the budget in terms of removing the subsidy over four years, that really, we are then going at the national level to the same system we already have at the local level, that EDAs have to raise the money from individuals to run their campaigns? Would he not agree that is where we are going, that it works pretty well at the local level and it will work as well at the national level?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the member's interest and the question.

I want to ensure I understand. When he was talking about "local", was he talking about municipal politics? Am I correct? Is that what the hon. member means?

No. Then I am sorry. I did not quite understand the point he was making with regard to the example because if we talk about municipal politics, there are many problems there too in terms of the wide open nature of money and the influence that it has.

I admit I would have made a better case if I had more time. I do get a little long-winded. I accept that. Not to worry though, I will have many more opportunities to be on my feet talking about this, so that the member will know 100% what the case is that I am making.

I am basically saying that the public subsidy was a reflection of the will of the Canadian people when they voted. The \$2 only went to the party that got the vote. Therefore, that member's vote actually meant something because if one was a New Democrat or a Liberal or a Green member running in Alberta, the fact of the matter is that most of that member's votes did not matter because the first past the post meant that he or she could win with 40%.

Do not forget that we have a government in this place right now that has 40% of the support of the Canadian people, but because we have first past the post it got 100% of the power.

There are all kinds of problems. I say to the hon. member that this just exacerbates it.

• (1540)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again thank the hon. member for his usual passion in his speeches and for talking about issues that are truly important to Canadians and especially to the people in his riding.

I know you were specific on some of the things that we could be doing to enhance our democracy.

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When we are looking at the budget, we are losing the subsidy. What do you truly think is the important thing we could be bringing forward here to make the changes necessary to bring forward the reforms that we can see in democracy without having to bring in the mighty dollar to ensure we can do that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Just a subtle reminder to members to remember to direct their comments through the Chair. That keeps our deliberations civil.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sudbury for his support, for the real, positive changes that we could make to this place that quite frankly would make us prouder of the democracy we have.

I mentioned two of them. I would be glad to talk about them over and over, but the heading is to abolish the Senate. If we want to save money on wasted expense, there is \$100 million that we can save with one little bit of surgery. Just cut off that house over there. It is \$100 million. However, it really does not make that much difference except to those who get the cash for life lottery Senate appointment.

The other thing we can do is proportional representation. I started to get into that when I was mentioning that in our current system, the \$2 per vote subsidy meant that every vote made a difference. It actually had an impact whether the member won that seat or not.

With our first past the post system, although the government received less than 40% of the vote of all Canadians who voted, it got 100% of the power not because it did anything wrong but because we have a system that does not serve our democracy as well as proportional representation would.

We will be making suggestions in that regard. We will continue to do that until those changes are actually brought about and we have true democracy in our House of Commons.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is going to be a hard act to follow.

I am honoured to rise in the House once again as the member of Parliament for Nickel Belt. I was born and raised in Nickel Belt. I worked for 34 years at Inco. I was married and raised my family in this great riding.

There is no greater privilege for me than standing in the House and defending the interests of my constituents. I humbly thank them for the confidence they have placed in me and for returning me to this great chamber with an even larger majority than in 2008.

I also want to congratulate all of my colleagues in the House for their election to this great institution.

I wish to congratulate my leader, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, for his energy, for his commitment to the people of this great country, for his unwavering belief that we can make a difference for families everywhere and for his historic success on May 2. I am honoured to sit as a member of the official opposition under his great leadership.

During this election I had the opportunity to connect with constituents from Foleyet to Onaping to Chelmsford and Azilda, to Killarney and Garden Village, and to Noëlville and Sturgeon Falls.

While these communities are distant and unique from one another, the voters of these communities share a lot of common concerns.

At doorstep after doorstep voters shared their worries over their jobs and their pensions. They spoke about the challenges of caring for their loved ones. Seniors spoke about the lack of adequate pensions and access to health care. Active and involved citizens told me they are quitting their volunteer work because they cannot afford to fill their cars with gas.

Just two days ago, splashed across the front page of *The Sudbury Star* was a report that read:

The high price of gasoline isn't just costing Sudburians at the pumps. It is hurting community service organizations that rely on volunteer drivers for vital programs to help seniors and others remain at home and out of institutions. Meals on Wheels has experienced a sharp drop in the number of volunteers delivering meals to thousands of clients in Sudbury every month since gas prices began spiking about a year ago. In some cases, particularly in outlying areas such as Rayside-Balfour, Valley East and Onaping, the shortage of volunteers is so severe, it could soon affect client service.

The reality of the north is such that people do not have access to public transport. Their cars are their lifeline to work, to their extracurricular activities and to their educational institutions.

These are some of the issues of foremost concern in northern Ontario, and these are some of the issues that are neglected in the budget.

Speaking of the budget, I want to start by noting that the government listened to New Democrats and Canadians by restoring the eco-energy home retrofit program. I stress that this program should be reinstated permanently, not just for one year.

I have met with constituents who were cut off when the government abruptly cancelled the program. These people had already signed contracts for renovating their homes, assuming they were going to receive support from the federal government. I ask the government: will these people be able to apply retroactively for this program?

I also have businesses in my riding that had to lay off employees when this program was cancelled. I was very pleased that my leader came up to Nickel Belt and held a press conference at the site of one of these businesses to bring much-needed attention to the consequences of the government's short-sighted decision to cancel this program. Let us make it permanent.

On another positive note, the budget extends the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors for an additional year. New Democrats have been calling for this measure and welcome it.

This week many of my colleagues have stood for the first time in this chamber and given their inaugural speeches on behalf of their constituents. After listening to their eloquent remarks about the short-sightedness of the budget, it is clear that whether one is from British Columbia, the Prairies, Quebec, Ontario or Atlantic Canada, the budget ignores Canadians.

The budget does almost nothing for improving access to rural health care. The loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses does not go far enough because it does not increase the actual number of doctors and nurses in the system, which is what we need.

The Budget

The budget does nothing to strengthen CPP and does nothing to provide relief for the family budget. Despite Conservative claims, we still have 300,000 more unemployed since the recession, and of the jobs that have been created, an overwhelming majority are part time.

• (1545)

The number of involuntary part-time workers in Canada is now at 500,000. How are families going to pay down their debt, save for their children's education or put away for their retirement? They can barely pay their heating bills.

With respect to employment insurance, over the next five years EI premiums will exceed benefits by \$15 billion.

During my first term as member of Parliament for Nickel Belt, my team helped over 1,400 constituents with various issues, but that figure does not include the processing of passports. Over 4,000 passports were processed with the help of my office.

Over one-quarter of the 1,400 cases had to do with EI. Workers who paid into the system were losing their benefits and could not access training. Let me remind the House that miners went through a strike almost a year long as a direct result of the government's refusal to protect the interests of workers and their communities from foreign takeovers.

I also wish to say a few words about the government's ideological move to pressure municipalities into public-private partnerships, also known as P3 projects. There are countless Canadians and international examples of failed or flawed P3 projects, yet the City of Greater Sudbury is planning a \$40 million P3 biodiesel plant with \$10 million of federal funding.

Here are just five of the failed P3 projects. There was the Hamilton Entertainment and Convention Facilities Inc. P3 project; the end result was that it was abandoned because it was inflexible and reduced access. The Hamilton-Wentworth water and wastewater treatment P3 project was abandoned in the end because of maintenance problems, legal disputes, high costs and poor risk transfer. In the case of the Royal Ottawa Hospital P3 project, the end result was that it was flawed with high costs, secrecy and bed cuts. In the case of the Timmins and District Hospital dialysis centre P3, the end result was that it failed because no bidders were interested. The end result of the Welland Community Centre P3 project was that it failed because the project was deemed not viable in the P3 format due to secrecy.

Over the course of my remarks I have offered a snapshot of the reality in the north, yet this budget offers nothing to help.

The government also could have given the north its own independent economic development agency. It could have made FedNor an independent agency.

It is no accident that my first act in Parliament was to table a bill to make FedNor a stand-alone economic agency. The minister from the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka likes to harp that making FedNor independent creates a new bureaucracy, but nothing could be further from the truth. I ask the two ministers who are now responsible, the Minister of Industry and the President of the Treasury Board, why southern Ontario can get its own independent economic develop-

ment agency, but not the north. Why is there the double standard? Is it too hard to relinquish political control?

It is clear that the negatives of this budget far outweigh the small positives. It is also clear that the government paid no attention to the 60% of Canadians who did not vote for it. If, as it claims, it is the government for all Canadians, then we should have expected the Prime Minister to back that claim with meaningful support for Canadian families in this budget. Unfortunately, he did not.

There are billions in corporate tax cuts that do not create jobs, and billions in planned service cuts. There is nothing for small businesses, nothing for improving access to rural health care, nothing for lifting seniors out of poverty and nothing for addressing the needs of Canadian families and their youth. Northern Ontario remains without its own independent economic development agency.

In summary, the concerns of my constituents remain unaddressed. I cannot support this budget. I will not support this budget.

• (1550)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise. I also would like to take a turn to thank my constituents of Scarborough—Agincourt for returning me for an eighth term.

I listened with interest to the debate. It brought me back to the debate when my colleague from, I believe, Hamilton Centre was talking about proportional representation. I am sure his colleague might want to jump in on this and let us know his views.

The figures for what happened in the last election show that nationally the Bloc had 6.5% of the vote, but in Quebec it had 23% of the vote. The Green Party had 3.91%. The Green Party, at 3.91%, has one representative, while the Bloc, at 6.5%, has four representatives. In some countries that have proportional representation, and unlike our country, which has first past the post, if the government of the day does not support the minority that a member represents or where the member is from, it takes that level of 3% or 4% and raises it to 10%.

I am speaking specifically of Turkey, where this upcoming weekend there will be an election. In order for a party to get a seat in Turkey's parliament, it must get 10% of the vote.

If that were the case and the Conservatives were all of a sudden to raise it to 10%, we would not have any representation from the Green Party and we would not have any representation from the Bloc. I wonder if this is the right move—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I did not really hear a question in that statement. However, with regard to proportional representation, I think it would be the way to go.

The Budget

A lot of European countries have proportional representation. With proportional representation, everybody in Canada would be represented. That would make their vote count.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your new job in the chair.

I also want to congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt on his resounding victory. Like the victory of my other colleague from Sudbury, it came about because of their dedication, particularly to the steelworkers of Vale Inco, who, as we know, were on strike for a very long time. Their fight for decent-paying jobs and quality pensions has obviously paid off. I am delighted that they are back.

The member just gave an eloquent speech about what is positive in the budget. Yes, having the eco-energy home retrofit program restored is indeed a positive in this budget, and I am glad he talked about it.

However, he also focused at some length on the most vulnerable in our community. In particular, he had the chance to address the plight of seniors. All of us who were knocking on doors in this last campaign are very well aware that seniors were the innocent victims of this global economic downturn. They have worked all their lives and have played by the rules, and now everywhere they turn, with every bill they open, they are paying more and getting less.

The government missed an important opportunity in the budget to seize the moment. Instead of taking \$700 million to raise every senior out of poverty, it chose to help only half the seniors or, alternatively, to give all the seniors half of what they need to be lifted out of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, you well know that in our province some of that \$50-a-month benefit is going to be clawed back if they live in subsidized housing. Other parts of that \$50 are going to be clawed back by the provincial government.

Would the member comment and tell us whether he thinks \$50 a month is really enough for the hard-working seniors and pensioners in his community of Sudbury?

● (1555)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Fifty dollars a month just does not cut it. I have seniors who come to both of my offices in Nickel Belt on a regular basis who are hurting, and \$50 is not going to do it.

We have seniors who cannot afford to pay their heating anymore. They have had to block off sections of their homes so that they can heat the parts of the home they are going to be living in. We have seniors who are using the food bank.

This is not acceptable in a great country like Canada.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the new member for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon.

I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your ascension to the speakership, as well as your colleagues. I know you will serve this House very well.

I also want to thank the constituents of Edmonton—Leduc for electing me to this chamber for a fifth time.

I would like to congratulate all re-elected and newly elected MPs. It is certainly a very different chamber from what it was before the election. It shows, in fact, that elections matter, that votes matter, that voters can fundamentally alter the political reality and the leadership of political parties in this place, as they have done. It also shows that we should always treasure the form of government we have. Our form of government is obviously, as Winston Churchill said, not perfect, but we should embrace the positive aspects of our political system and the results it delivers.

I also want to acknowledge all of those who put their names forward in the last election, in my constituency and across the country, who were not successful. It takes courage, that virtue which Aristotle said was the greatest virtue, to put their name forward, knock on doors, go out there and participate in forums. I want to commend all of those people who put their names forward.

Lastly I would like to recognize all those who volunteer, those Canadians who give their time and efforts to volunteer for their candidate and party. They deserve our recognition as well.

Today we are debating the budget introduced earlier this week by the hon. Minister of Finance, which is substantially the same document that our government presented in March of this year. During the election, we explicitly promised to reintroduce this budget if re-elected, which is exactly what we have done.

What does this budget do? First of all, it continues to support job creation. We have created 540,000 jobs since July 2009, an outstanding figure when compared to other industrialized countries.

How does it do this? It provides a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring by this vital sector, something that was very strongly put forward and endorsed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

It extends the work-sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers to help Canadians in some of the hardest hits areas stay in the workforce. This has helped companies like Argus in my constituency in the Nisku area. It had experienced a sharp downturn, but the measures I mentioned allowed it to keep employees. Because it kept these people and did not lose them and is now experiencing more growth, it can fulfill the increased orders. This was a very good program that we are continuing.

The third point I want to mention in this area is our support for the manufacturing and processing sector by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance rate for investment in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment for an additional two years. This was first put forward in an industry committee report in February 2007. It was put in the budget of March 2007. It has been extended until this point and, obviously, will be extended for another two years once the budget passes. It is a credit to the committee that I had the privilege of chairing.

Mr. Speaker, I know you spent some time on that committee. All four parties endorsed that measure, and I hope they all endorse this measure and this specific budget.

The last thing in this area is providing renewed funding of almost \$100 million over two years for research, development and demonstrations of clean energy and energy efficiency.

The second thing we do in this budget is preserve Canada's fiscal advantage. We reaffirm our plan to eliminate deficits a year earlier than previously projected without raising taxes, without cutting transfers to persons, seniors and families, and without cutting transfers to provinces for things like health care, education and social services. In fact, transfers to provinces for health care will increase by 6% per year and by 3% a year for education and social services.

This hit home very strongly during the recent election campaign. People said they wanted the government to balance the budget as quickly as possible, but they wanted to see essential programs, like health care and education, maintained going forward.

We should recognize that the deficit in 2010-11 is projected to be 25% lower than it was in the previous fiscal year and to shrink again by more than 25% in the next year. This is very good news. We are on track to meet our targets and we should continue to do so.

The third area I want to talk about is strengthening our families and communities. Obviously in this House there has been great discussion about how we help these low income seniors. We are proposing to enhance the guaranteed income supplement for low income seniors by \$300 million, providing additional yearly benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples.

The second thing is to introduce a family caregiver tax credit of up to \$2,000.

The third thing is providing nearly \$870 million over two years to address climate change and air quality, including the extension of the eco-energy retrofit program, which will help homeowners. It is a very popular program and we have proposed extending it by a year.

● (1600)

I want to talk about an area of passion for me personally, that of research and development and innovation. I had the experience, as I mentioned, of serving on the industry committee and meeting a lot of the scientists and creators across this country, who are absolutely inspiring.

This budget continues our efforts along these lines by investing in innovation and the economy of tomorrow. It provides \$80 million in new funding over three years through the industrial research assistance program. The IRAP program under the National Research Council, in my view, is one of the best government programs in targeting resources towards small- and medium-size businesses to improve their efficiency so that they can grow. One of Canada's fundamental challenges going forward is how we get those small- and medium-size businesses to grow and become larger businesses. It is exactly why we are investing in the IRAP program.

Another thing we are doing is establishing 10 new Canada excellence research chairs. I should point out that I am very proud of the university in my city of Edmonton. The University of Alberta has

The Budget

already been successful at obtaining four Canada excellence research chairs. The university president had a function here in Ottawa in February, where she had all the excellence research chairs from across the country present their ideas and research. It was absolutely fascinating. Our government is obviously adding to this program in this budget, which is an excellent initiative.

We are increasing the budgets of the three federal granting councils by \$47 million annually. This was requested by the Association of Universities and Colleges and by researchers across the country, who were saying that we still needed to fund basic research and the three granting councils at an even better rate.

The next story I want to talk about is our support for students. Since 2006, we have supported students in a number of ways. We have created the Canada student grant program. It is providing up to \$250 per month of assistance to low income students and up to \$100 per month to middle income students.

We have also provided \$140 million per year to encourage more young Canadians to pursue apprenticeships, including the new apprenticeship incentive grant and apprenticeship completion grant. I do want to recognize Sam Shaw from the city of Edmonton. He was president of NAIT, which trains the highest proportion of apprentices across this country and does a fantastic job in doing so.

Where we are going from here with this plan is to talk about student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas. Practising family physicians will be eligible for federal student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses will be eligible for federal student loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

We are also supporting Canadian students abroad. Many student groups have approached us as members of Parliament for this. We are reducing the 13-week minimum duration requirement to 3 consecutive weeks with respect to the education and textbook tax credit. We are doubling the in-study income exemption and we are reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time Canadian student loan recipients.

I want to touch briefly on my own province of Alberta. The budget demonstrates strong federal government support for provinces like Alberta, including transfers for vital areas like health care, education and social services. In fact, we have increased transfers to the Province of Alberta since 2005 by nearly 50%, totalling nearly \$3.4 billion. This is outstanding, allowing provinces to address their health care, education and social service needs.

I ask all parliamentarians to endorse this plan. It is a prudent plan. It is a plan that has been endorsed by economic organizations the world over.

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Relatively speaking, our country has done very well. We understand that there are some challenges out there and a significant amount of risk, if we look at the tragedy that occurred in Japan, the European debt situation, and the U.S. economy and fiscal situation being weaker than expected. That is why we need a prudent plan going forward, and that is exactly what this budget is.

That is why I am asking members of Parliament to endorse this budget.

• (1605)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I must apologize, as I did not congratulate the hon. member in my last question. I send him my congratulations.

With that, I would like to ask the hon. member a question. First, why is he a Bruins fan? The second question relates to something that is of the utmost importance.

Truly, we have had some great discussion over the last few years on the Conservatives' idea of corporate tax giveaways. We on this side of the House see the corporate tax giveaways as not doing what we would like to see, which is addressing the needs of Canadian families and helping seniors, and addressing the needs of family doctors and bringing them to rural and northern Ontario.

Why is there such a push to go to the wall for corporate tax cuts when they are not necessarily creating the jobs we need right now to help Canadian families?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure the question about the Bruins is in order, but I will start with that one.

I am in fact an Oilers fan, but when I was growing up as a young man, there was another young man from Parry Sound named Bobby Orr who inspired me to become a Bruins fan. I have to make that confession in the House of Commons.

I do want to congratulate my friend on his re-election. We work on opposite sides of the aisle, but we do work together on many issues.

In terms of corporate taxation, I encourage him to read the report by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. The opposition often points to banks and the oil companies, but let us talk about the manufacturing sector. The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters put out an excellent report in January of this year listing all of the benefits of reducing corporate tax rates.

The second thing I would encourage the member to do is to go to the OECD website and compare the corporate tax rates across the OECD. Compare our rates with those of Chile, South Korea, Sweden, Denmark and Norway. In fact, we are very competitive if we move to a combined 25% federal-provincial corporate tax rate across this country. We would be in the middle of the OECD and that is where we want to be. We want to be competitive to continue to attract investment to create jobs in this country.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations.

I would like to address something that I know is of interest to my colleague.

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are among the most significant and critical health care issues in Canada. We cannot ignore them.

Today, 500,000 Canadians suffer from some form of dementia. The impact on those who have the illness and their families is profound, as is the cost to society of \$15 billion today and \$153 billion in 30 years.

Why does the federal investment in programs, research, and income support and assistance pale in comparison to the health, economic and social impacts of this devastating disease?

• (1610)

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It was addressed by the member and me in this chamber in February when we spoke about the motion that I brought forward on Alzheimer's. She spoke for her party very well in endorsing that motion. The motion was adopted unanimously by the House of Commons.

The member is absolutely right on what the costs Alzheimer's will be for society, not only the fiscal costs but also the tremendous human costs for people who have Alzheimer's and for their families. That is exactly why I would ask her to support this budget. This budget allocates up to \$100 million to establish a Canada brain research fund to support the very best in Canadian neuroscience and accelerate discoveries to improve the health and quality of life for Canadians who suffer from brain disorders. This is in the budget.

In fact, the member should take credit for that because she endorsed that motion put forward on Alzheimer's. I encourage her to take a specific look at that and endorse this budget.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Edmonton—Leduc for the fine work he did as chair of the finance committee and the input he had into this budget.

This budget deals a lot with supporting job growth and making certain that we continue to create jobs. I wonder if the member, who spoke so eloquently, would give us an indication as to what this budget does to bring down our deficit.

I know there were some long-term goals on the deficit and coming back to budgetary balance. Could he explain to us what this good budget does in bringing us back to a balanced budget?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his re-election. I think he received 84% of the vote in this election.

An hon. member: He squeaked through.

Mr. James Rajotte: He barely squeaked through. I do not know who the other 16% are.

In terms of the deficit reduction—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification.

*The Budget***WAYS AND MEANS**

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on being acting Chair, as well.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on June 6, 2011.

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

* * *

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the explanation by the member for Edmonton—Leduc and rundown on the election in Crowfoot. That was quite gratifying. However, I wonder if you would allow him the time to actually answer my question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): As it turns out, that is just a continuing debate issue.

We will resume debate with the member for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the budget today in this my maiden speech in the House of Commons. First, let me congratulate you on your new role in the Chair.

I thank the people of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon for putting their trust in me to represent them in Ottawa.

On May 2, I said that I would be taking the common sense of the common people to the House of Commons and I make that commitment to them again today.

I thank all of the volunteers who worked so hard to make my election possible. Special thanks goes to my good friend and campaign manager, Matthew Barker; my official agent, Tyler Schulz; my volunteer coordinator, Joe Verhulst; my office manager, Audrey Green; my sign manager, Jeremy Giesbrecht; and the hundreds of others who took part in ensuring we elected a Conservative in Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon.

I also thank my wife, Lisa, and my son, Maclean, for their constant love and support. I would not be here without them. I also thank my sisters, their husbands and my mom and dad for supporting me in whatever path I have chosen, including this latest one.

I thank the many members who have taken the time and gone out of their way to let me know just how well loved Chuck Strahl was when he was in this place. As countless members have reminded me, I have big shoes to fill. And, since countless members have asked, the answer is yes I can sing too, although dad would claim he has a better and lower voice.

I thank the former member of Parliament, Grant McNally, who hired me as a young 20-year-old, and the current member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission who brought me aboard as his executive assistant in 2004 and gave me the opportunity to work for him and to see firsthand how the job of an MP should be done.

Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon is a beautiful big riding. It is 30,000 square kilometres in size. I dare say that it is the most impressive riding in all of Canada. I would invite my colleagues in this House and all Canadians to come and visit. I can assure people that if they do make it out to this great part of our great country, they will be back again and again.

It is an honour to address the budget today. As a Conservative, I campaigned on our low tax plan for jobs and growth and I am proud to see that we delivered on our campaign commitments. We promised additional funding for our most vulnerable seniors and we delivered. We promised tax credits for children's arts programs, for family caregivers, for volunteer firefighters and we have delivered. We promised to keep taxes low, something that no other party in this place campaigned on, and we have delivered.

I note that the official opposition and the Liberal Party, both in the campaign and here in debate, have reiterated their desire to increase taxes on job creators. However, I will tell members what a local non-profit organization in my riding had to say about that plan.

I will read a letter from the Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce into the record. It was sent to my predecessor, Chuck Strahl, on March 2, only three months ago. Just so that there is no confusion and no one can say that I have misconstrued the content, I will read it in its entirety. It reads, "Dear Mr. Strahl:

"On behalf of the Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to you to convey the importance of protecting the prosperity of the businesses within your constituency by ensuring the government follows through on its promise to reduce business taxes.

"With government stimulus programs ending this year, the tax reductions are especially important as they will free up capital to be put to work to grow Canada's businesses and its economy. This strategy has been supported by a majority of parliamentarians in two federal budgets since its inception in 2007.

"As of Jan. 1, 2011, the federal general corporate income tax rate fell from 18 per cent to 16.5 per cent, with a further 1.5 percentage point reduction scheduled for 2012. When fully implemented, this three percentage point reduction means that in each and every year going forward, business in British Columbia will save approximately \$400 million, money that can be used by businesses across the province to invest in their operations and create jobs.

"Today, some politicians are calling for these tax rate reductions to be reversed and for the government to direct the revenues to new spending. The Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce feels strongly this will constrain the job creation and investment in Chilliwack businesses. Our political leaders have to live up to the promises they have made. Businesses in Chilliwack and across the country have invested with the understanding that taxes would decline.

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• (1615)

"A sudden change of course would constitute a broken promise to thousands of businesses and the people they employ—including members of your constituency.

"Business tax reductions are relevant to all Canadian businesses—large and small—in all regions of the country, including Chilliwack. Small business has a keen interest in this issue. Most small businesses are suppliers to bigger businesses; opportunities flow when the larger firms have the capital to buy. The alternative—rising taxes—dries up those opportunities. A vibrant large business sector leads to a strong and prosperous small business sector.

"Reducing business taxes is also an issue of vital importance to your constituents. Business taxes fall directly on families in Chilliwack-workers through lower wages, consumers in the form of higher prices for goods and services, and shareholders (including pensioners who own equity through RPPs, RRSPs and mutual funds) through lower returns.

"As my MP, I am calling on you to protect the prosperity of the businesses and families within your constituency by ensuring the government follows through on its promise to reduce business taxes. You can be sure the Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce will continue to champion for a strong economic environment that allows the businesses in our city to grow and create the jobs and opportunities that make this community a wonderful place to live and raise a family. We hope that you will actively do the same.

Sincerely,

Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce"

This letter was not written by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, although there will be benefits all across the country. It was not written by the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, though there are specific benefits in the budget for British Columbia. It was written by the local Chamber of Commerce, put on its letterhead and put on its website, because it wanted everyone to know about its position on this issue. This is an organization of small and medium-sized businesses, not the big corporations that the other side likes to talk about.

Some of the most prominent members of the Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce are also prominent members of the local federal Liberal association. Even they can see the value of having tax policies that benefit our local businesses.

Over the last two years, our government has made unprecedented investments in infrastructure right across the country, and certainly in Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon.

On May 27, I was pleased to undertake my first official duty as a member of Parliament to participate in the official opening of the new Kawkawa Lake Road Bridge in Hope, British Columbia, along with Mayor Laurie French and MLA Barry Penner, a project made possible by Canada's economic action plan.

I was pleased to see in the budget that our government is committed to working with the provinces and municipalities to deliver a long-term infrastructure program that will continue to address the needs of our communities, a move that has been

applauded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We have also doubled the gas tax rebate and made it permanent, which will give our communities the funds and the certainty they need to invest in local infrastructure priorities.

Our budget contains even more items of importance for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon: support for agriculture, support for the forest and mining industries and support for tourism. It contains new investments to support priorities in first nations education, child and family services, water and housing, first nations health, as well as aboriginal skills development and training. There are measures to encourage doctors and nurses to choose to serve rural communities like Lytton, Lillooet, Cache Creek and Ashcroft, to name just a few.

There is much more to say about the Conservatives' low tax plan for jobs and growth. However, I will conclude by saying that the budget is good news for Canada, good news for British Columbia and good news for the people of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, and I encourage members on all sides of the House to support it.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to this position in the House.

It is a great responsibility and a great honour to be here with all of my colleagues from Quebec. I would first like to thank my constituents in Laval for the trust they placed in me in the election. I will defend their interests every day.

I would also like to highlight the work of my former member of Parliament, Nicole Demers, a wonderful person from the Bloc Québécois who worked for many years for the people of the riding of Laval.

We have different opinions, and I believe that the government's budget this year—which is essentially a cut and paste version of the last one—does not include any plans to improve front-line health care. I know something about that, because the riding of Laval has the largest number of seniors in the region.

The government must strengthen public pensions, because these individuals are very dependent on the small pensions they receive. We must compensate small businesses in the industrial sectors of Laval that need some support. We must also adopt concrete measures to reduce the tax burden on families.

• (1625)

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member, a new member like myself, on his election to this place.

The Conservative government has shown its support for health care in each budget that it has introduced since taking office. There have been 6% increases in Canada health and social transfers in every budget we have introduced and there are plans in this budget to continue that going forward.

The Budget

Unlike previous governments that have chosen to balance the budget on the backs of the provinces by cutting health care, we will continue to support health care by increasing the funding to the provinces in that regard.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new role. I know you will do a great job.

The new member's dad certainly held the respect of all in the House. If his career unfolds with half the success his father had, he will have a pretty good career.

He mentioned one thing in his speech about the firefighter's tax credit. I was able to work with a past colleague, Rick Casson, the former member for Lethbridge, on a couple of different initiatives, as did the member for Malpeque. Rick would take some joy in this being in the budget.

The problem is that the measure is a non-refundable credit. In some fire departments, those making under \$22,000 per year, which is not uncommon in volunteer fire departments, receive no benefits. They take the same risk and do the same job but they are not given the same respect and do not get the same benefit. Does the member see an injustice or inconsistency in that measure?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, it was great to campaign with this in our platform because every community in my riding is served by volunteer firefighters.

I know there has been broad support since we brought this measure forward. Having watched this House on CPAC on occasion when I was an observer, I know the member was part of a government that for 13 years had the opportunity to bring in the changes that he is talking about and it did not do it.

We are taking action. We are bringing in a tax credit of \$3,000 for volunteer firefighters. We think that is a great step.

[Translation]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

I am pleased to be rising in the House today to speak to the 2011 budget, which was tabled this week. I would first like to thank the constituents in the beautiful riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for giving me the opportunity to represent them for the fifth time in nine years. I should add that these wins would not have been possible without the help of my family and friends. As well, I would like to congratulate all of the hon. members here in the House on their victory, especially the newly elected members, who will enjoy the experience of a lifetime.

In addition, I would like to thank all of the candidates who ran as Liberals but, unfortunately, were not elected. We appreciate their hard work, their dedication and their loyalty to the party, and we wish them better luck next time.

Some things never change, and the Conservative government's budgets are one example. They are always more of the same old, same old. There is no vision or plan for the future. My leader, the leader of the Liberal Party, hit the nail on the head yesterday when he said that the budget shows profound complacency. There is no plan for job creation, for tackling the deficit or for poverty reduction.

Essentially, this budget has nothing to help ordinary Canadians who are counting on the government. Yet, the budget did not leave out the friends of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance or the Conservative Party.

• (1630)

[English]

A plan for a country such as Canada would require that the federal government put in place measures in order to encourage Canadian industries to make investments in green technologies, research, innovation, education and the corresponding infrastructures that would help with the promotion of this plan.

Money should not be spent frivolously like we have seen in the past few years, where most of the stimulus money was spent on advertising, bill boards, polling and photo ops. Essentially, these sums should be invested, not spent, in strategically vital areas that would contribute to both the long-term and the short-term vitality of the Canadian economy.

[Translation]

Canada needs an entrepreneurial vision that promotes prosperity and equal opportunity for all Canadians. Instead, the budget revealed a lack of long-term vision and failed to present any new ideas.

Even groups representing accountants said that they would like to see more general reductions rather than targeted tax breaks, which only make Canada's fiscal and economic regime more complex and inefficient. I would even go so far as to say that, if Canada wants to establish a financial framework that promotes recovery and sustainable economic growth, the Canadian tax system definitely needs to be simpler, more competitive and more efficient.

The government must develop a credible plan to promote job creation. Granting a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage the recruitment of new employees would be a good start. However, the regions and economic sectors that are still struggling need more than the \$1,000 allocated in this budget.

This budget merely serves to confirm the Conservatives' preference for an inflexible right-wing ideology over sound, evidence-based policies, a preference that is particularly visible in the government's approach to crime, justice, the environment, the economic recovery and deficit reduction.

For example, this government wants us to believe that it is managing the public purse carefully. On the contrary, since 2006, it took the Conservative government only one year to spend the largest surplus ever accumulated in the history of Canada. It also created an enormous deficit on top of having the dubious distinction of being the biggest spending government, year after year, in the history of Canada.

The Budget

History repeats itself. Proof of this lies in the fact that the first thing the Prime Minister did as leader of a majority government was to increase the number of ministers. Let us not forget that, during his last mandate, he increased the spending budgets of ministers' offices; the Privy Council Office's budget has increased by almost \$50 million in five years; and the Prime Minister's Office's budget increased by about 22%. This government dramatically increased advertising and public opinion research spending, which does not provide any tangible benefit to the Canadian economy but, rather, serves only to help the Conservatives get re-elected.

The Conservatives would like us to believe that they will balance the budget by 2015 but, to date, this government has got all its budget forecasts wrong. In fact, last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said it is unlikely that the budget will be balanced before 2017 at the earliest.

The Conservatives should never have disbanded the expenditure review committee of cabinet established by the Liberals. However, I am very pleased to note that, from time to time, they borrow the Liberals' good ideas and have announced that the committee will be restored to deal with this issue. However, no committee can replace an action plan.

This budget proposes other ideological cuts. The government is spending less money on subsidized housing than it did before the economic action plan was implemented.

There are total cuts of \$300 million, with a 45% decrease in funding for first nations housing. This really is not very surprising given that their recent election platform relied on cuts that the Minister of Finance himself could not explain. Today we see the results.

In their budget, the Conservatives are deliberately excluding low-income Canadians from certain measures, such as the caregiver tax credit and the volunteer firefighters tax credit. They are excluded by the fact that these tax credits are non-refundable and only help Canadians who have earned enough money during the year to pay taxes. I repeat, they are minimal, non-refundable tax credits that are not even available to low-income Canadians.

● (1635)

Furthermore, Canadian taxpayers with income of \$20,000 or less, or who have a dependent—in other words, those who are most in need—are not eligible for the caregiver tax credit.

The guaranteed income supplement will be increased by approximately \$50 per month for seniors. That does not even buy one cup of coffee per day. Canada will face many challenges in coming years. Canadians deserve to know what budget cuts will be made to reduce the deficit.

One of the cuts will affect the per-vote subsidies. We should not forget that the current regulations governing funding for political parties were established in order to limit the influence of big money in politics and to create a level playing field for all parties, especially small ones. We should also not forget that the Liberals are open to reforming funding for political parties, on condition that these principles are respected. No matter what changes are made, we are certain the Liberal Party will adapt and prosper. We will propose a

positive, long-term vision to Canadians and will give our supporters a reason to make donations.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his re-election to Parliament here in Ottawa.

He said that in the budget presented by the Conservative government, our seniors will get an additional \$50 or so per month. I wonder if my colleague could tell us what he believes the Conservative government could have done better to improve the lives of Canadian seniors.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, before I answer the question, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Nickel Belt on his election as well.

It is very simple: the increase is about \$50 a month. The Conservatives, who are very good when it comes to communications, are spinning this by saying that it is \$600 a year, and thus \$6,000 over 10 years or \$12,000 over 20 years. However, the increase should have been at least \$100 a month. Instead of \$300 million, they could easily invest \$600 million or \$800 million and cut Conservative spending on advertising and public opinion polls.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate my colleague for the great work that he has done in his riding and will continue to do here in our party.

I want to ask him about the whole issue in and around seniors and the struggles that seniors have in maintaining the quality of life to which we know they aspire.

I see nothing in the budget that speaks to the issue of housing. It is an important issue in the Montreal area that the member represents. I would like to hear his comments on the issue of housing and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

● (1640)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I too want to congratulate the member for York West.

I want to make a comment again about jurisdiction. In the Liberal Party platform in the last election we proposed putting money into social housing. It would have supplemented provincial moneys that were to be put in, but the decisions would have been made at the local level.

Every member in the House has people in their riding who need social housing. In a riding that is well-to-do, where people live well, there are still people who are struggling and have a hard time making ends meet. What the Liberal Party had proposed was the perfect answer, or part of the solution to respond to some of the requests that were made across this country for social housing.

It is not just people in my riding or in the riding of York West who need money, but members across the way also need money in their ridings for social housing. The Liberal Party had the right answer.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to commend my hon. colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, who just gave an important speech on the budget. He talked about the problems experienced by some of our most vulnerable seniors concerning the guaranteed income supplement. What is really missing is another \$50—or half of the amount needed to ensure that these people are not living below the poverty line.

The member talked about certain sectors. For example, the government has tripled the amount it spends on advertising since it came to power. I could suggest a few other things to my colleague, who could explain them further, things like tax havens and the tax breaks given to oil companies. The Conservatives need to get their priorities straight.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska. I think I got the name of his riding right this time. I want to congratulate him on his re-election.

We can easily give a number of examples, which we talked about during the election campaign. They could cut the costs associated with the prisons, the fighter jets and the corporate tax cuts. That is an easy answer.

If the members opposite were willing, everyone could agree that we should be giving more money to seniors.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to speak to the budget. First, I want to acknowledge the support of the people of Random—Burin—St. George's. I am honoured again to have the privilege to represent them. This is the second time they have elected me in this federal capacity. I represented part of the riding in the District of Grand Bank for 12 years, so this is a continuation of the opportunity again to represent those constituents.

Random—Burin—St. George's is very much a rural riding. It has 180 communities and spreads from one end of the province to the other. For anyone to have some kind of understanding and appreciation for the riding, one really has to travel there. There are eight isolated communities and people can only get to them by ferry. To campaign in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's takes a lot of effort, especially to get to the 180 very rural communities, but it is important to do so.

It is because of my riding being so rural that I have a real appreciation for the lack of jobs in those very small communities, for any kind of measure taken that would impact on the jobs or services being supplied in rural communities, especially federal services.

People think it is very easy to cut federal services in very small towns and that there really is not a lot of flak as a result of cutting a federal service in a small town. They think that a few people cannot be too much of a concern and their protests about the closure of any kind of federal facility will not have much of an impact. That is the wrong way to approach the removal of services, particularly federal services.

The Budget

When I look at what is happening in the budget with respect to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, I am really surprised. I guess “disappointed” is a better word because it clearly shows that there is no appreciation or understanding for how important the fishery is to the economy of Canada, not just to Newfoundland and Labrador, the Atlantic provinces or the Pacific coast but to the entire country. Obviously, any type of realization of income from any part of the region impacts other parts of Canada.

What is being proposed for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans over three years is more than \$80 million being cut. For me that is a serious issue and one that must be responded to, addressed, and brought to the attention of anyone who is willing to listen, especially the Conservative government.

It appears the Conservatives have no understanding or realization of how important the fishery is to the entire country, especially when we talk about fish as a product, source of food and protein. What really bothered me was some of the commentary around the reduction in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the blanket commentary when the government talks about trying to create more effective service and efficiencies in the system.

One line that really bothered me was that Conservatives are doing this to focus on the government's priorities. I have a real issue with that. If they are going to remove in excess of \$80 million from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, my first question is, what about the priorities of the fishers and the industry? Did any consultation take place?

The Conservatives are talking about doing a strategic review, yet they have identified the amount of money that has to be removed from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. If a strategic review is going to be done and the removal of that amount of money has already been identified, at some point in time it must have been decided where that money would come from, what services would be impacted, and what jobs would be lost.

Yet, we are told that the strategic review has not even taken place, but that amount of money is going to be cut from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

• (1645)

That is a concern for me because it will impact on services and jobs. Cutting money from ACOA, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, is a real issue for us in Atlantic Canada. That is our economic development engine. The money that flows through ACOA from the Conservative government, or from any government for that matter, is money that is used for economic development, especially in small communities that really do not have access to government funding in terms of grants and do not have access to money from banks. These communities look to ACOA to partner with them in terms of trying to create employment and put some infrastructure in place.

Those are serious issues that are going to impact the people in Atlantic Canada. When the government is talking about removing in excess of \$31 million from ACOA, jobs are going to be impacted, people's lives are going to be impacted, and economic development is going to be impacted. Those are all serious issues.

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Let us look at Marine Atlantic. Marine Atlantic services the Gulf of St. Lawrence, between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Actually the ferry lands in Port aux Basques. Looking at that, it is really an extension of the TransCanada Highway. That is how we view Marine Atlantic.

When I am looking at Marine Atlantic and seeing a cut of \$6.6 million over three years, clearly jobs are going to be impacted, services are going to be impacted, and yet the government does not identify what those services are going to be. What has the government done? It has created a crisis among employees who really do not know whether or not they are going to have jobs. They do not know what services are going to be impacted.

This is a serious issue for us in Newfoundland and Labrador, just as it is serious issue for the people in Nova Scotia when we consider that this in fact an extension of our TransCanada Highway. Those are serious issues when that amount of money is being removed without consultation. Yet, when the government says it is going to do a strategic review, it has not consulted. How can the government just say that it is going to remove that amount of money from these particular entities? These three impact negatively on Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look at what is happening with rural post offices, another serious issue for us. Here we are looking at the hours of employees in rural post offices being cut, and yet the government says it has a moratorium on the closure of post offices in rural communities.

Well, there can be a moratorium on the closure of post offices, but in the end it will impact on the service provided if there is a reduction in the number of employees' hours. Again, what does that mean? It means that federal services are being impacted. These are serious issues.

Let us look at the marine safety sub-centre in St. John's. The government is going to move what the minister regrettably called "a call centre" to Nova Scotia. I have no problem with moving anything, but things cannot be moved without consulting, talking, and finding out if it is the right thing to do. Clearly, this is not the right thing to do.

It is a distress centre. There are 10,000 miles of coastline around Newfoundland. If we do not realize what this means in terms of moving that distress centre, the service offered through that distress centre out of Newfoundland and Labrador, then the government does not understand the importance of marine safety.

This is not about just fishers. This is about anybody who utilizes the waterways as a highway, whether it is tourists or businesses other than fishers. A lot of trade takes place. A lot of boats come into Newfoundland and Labrador. Somehow no one has taken into account the impact of going down this path on these issues.

If the government is going to look at strategic review exercises, if it is going to look at trying to find ways of saving money, for Heaven's sake it should work with those who are going to be impacted.

Because of the Conservative government, we have the largest debt in our history. We are looking at \$56 billion. If we are looking at a debt of that magnitude, then the issue for us is that the people of

Newfoundland and Labrador or Atlantic Canada or Canada at large did not create that debt, so the government should not put burdens on their backs to try to solve it.

• (1650)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member back to the House of Commons and congratulate her on her re-election.

However, I would like to correct the record on a couple of points.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Do you have enough time?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I probably do not have enough time for all, Mr. Speaker. However, the one that concerns me the most is the misrepresentation on the marine station sub-centre. I guess it is in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Search and rescue is a serious subject. I do not know if the hon. member has ever had to depend on search and rescue or ever seen search and rescue, but I have. I can tell the member that I do not care where the phone call comes from at all. I want to ensure that a boat, or a chopper or a plane can get out there. That is the whole purpose of search and rescue. It is not about who receives the call.

The search and rescue centre in Halifax handles everything from one side of Greenland down to the American line. It handles all the Gulf of St. Lawrence. How can it do that if the member's theory is correct?

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the member opposite has no understanding of the lifestyle and the impact in terms of having access to a centre like that in Newfoundland and Labrador, with 10,000 miles of coastline and people working in that distress centre who understand what is happening on the waterways of Newfoundland and Labrador.

However, we are also talking about jobs being impacted.

If that does not mean anything to the member, it means something to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are working in that distress centre and who will no longer have employment.

That is a serious issue in our province, as well.

If you look at what has been happening in Newfoundland and Labrador, you will see the number of federal employees dropped progressively for the last three years. This year there are over 200 federal jobs less in Newfoundland and Labrador, and this is going to create an even further decrease.

• (1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I just another remind members to direct their comments to the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asked if the sub-centre, the search and rescue centre, is in St. John's. Yes, it is in St. John's South—Mount Pearl. It is in my riding. He should know that before he stands up to ask a question.

In terms of the member for Random—Burin—St. George's, I congratulate her on her re-election to the House of Commons.

Some comments were made on the functions of the search and rescue centre. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans called it a call centre. It is far from a call centre. Not only do the search and rescue people take calls, but if they cannot raise the vessel, they also try to contact the family, the vessel owner, the whole nine yards.

I have a question for the member for Random—Burin—St. George's. What is the Liberal stand with regard to the call for an inquiry into the fall of the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries?

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl to this House. It is good to have him here with us.

The issue for us is to ensure that the fishery survives. That is what is crucial. We have to ensure that we do everything we can to see that industry continues as a viable industry, whether that means some restructuring. However, it is important that whatever we do, we work with the province.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville today.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about this, the most important bill Parliament passes every year.

Before going further, I would like to formally thank the people of Oakville for their confidence in electing me on May 2. Our team put together the largest percentage of the votes in Oakville since 1993, at 51.6%, which was more than all the other parties combined. I will continue to work hard in the interest of the people of Oakville in the 41st Parliament.

Outside of interest rates, which is delegated to the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the federal budget essentially creates the financial structure of our country. This budget will benefit every Canadian to one degree or another, but in particular I would like to talk about our elderly citizens and our youth.

There is no magic bullet for the economy of Canada and there is no government that can take some grand action in one year and solve all our problems. Good budgeting requires consistency and stability over years, something this government has accomplished with great discipline and by being principle based.

Investors, entrepreneurs, employers and inventors are all risk takers. They make things happen. They create jobs. They need to know the conditions under which they risk their energies, their time, their talents and their capital will be relatively stable. What many opposition members in the House do not understand, and I do not think some have ever understood, is that if these people cannot move forward with fair taxes, reasonable rules and a reasonable level of productivity, they will take their resources and they will create jobs in another country.

Canada is currently the envy of the world for a number of reasons: the stability of our banking system; the low debt to GDP ratio; and growth in our economy, which is to a large degree due to good and consistent management of credit since 2006. Not that we were timid to act to protect our economy in the worldwide recession. That recession demanded dynamic action in the 2009 budget, encom-

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passed in Canada's economic action plan, which the official opposition of the day supported, and the benefits have been realized over two and a half years. In fact, they are still being realized with this budget and it will ensure that the growth continues.

Mostly through 2009, over about nine months, 400,000 jobs were lost. The economic action plan has now helped bring back over 540,000 new jobs, most of them full-time, since the summer of 2009.

The vast majority of the jobs were not created inside governments. The idea of continually increasing the size of governments is not sustainable. Just ask any person who has lived through what they are experiencing in Ireland, Greece or Portugal today. Those people are suffering through what was technically bankruptcy in their nations.

The jobs were created primarily by companies, small and large, that bid on 26,000 projects across Canada and built them and also by their suppliers. Therefore, a lot of these jobs were not visible. For every hour of construction, it takes four hours of planning and engineering. Thousands of planners, engineers and surveyors were employed, plus all their support staff and people at the companies that provided their facilities such as paper, computers, software. Even local restaurants had more jobs.

The economic action plan created a chain reaction of connected and dynamic synergies of economic activity across Canada, and it worked. Since July 2009, 540,000 Canadians have been able to go home and tell their families that they have a job.

Unlike many other countries, our success has been demonstrated in seven consecutive quarters of economic growth. Canada is on the threshold of a brilliant future if we remain consistent in maintaining the conditions for growth and are cautious with our spending. That is what this budget will accomplish as part of a consistent, principle-based, national financial plan since 2006. If we stay on track, the world will increasingly come to our door with investment and the jobs investment brings. The world needs what Canada has such as high-tech equipment, autos, energy, mineral wealth.

In the election we just won, Canadians told us they wanted stability and they wanted us to continue to strengthen our country. They do not want new taxes. They are burdened enough and this budget contains no new taxes. However, unemployment is still too high in Canada, and the worldwide economic problems are certainly not over.

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• (1700)

Our American friends buy over 60% of what we produce in Canada, everything from state of the art technology, such as RIM's BlackBerry, autos, potash to paper. However, their economy is quite sluggish. For example, their real estate market is near dead and dragging them down. It is great that Americans buy Canadian products. One out of four jobs in Canada comes from trade, but we have been over-dependent on the U.S. market for decades. Our government has recognized this and the budget addresses a key problem, which is productivity.

We are also pursuing free trade with 50 other nations to expand our international customer base into the billions, including the European Union, China and India.

We are told that Canadian workers produce less than American workers. By the numbers technically that is true and has been for a long time. Why is that? We work long hours. It is because U.S. companies in the past invested in methods, machinery and technology that allowed them to produce more per worker.

Why did Canadian companies not do that? They did not have to because of the low Canadian dollar in the nineties. The government of the day was very complacent. Manufacturers simply undersold U.S. manufacturers due to the exchange rates. That competitive edge is now gone and we have to play catch up. This budget once again recognizes that by allowing businesses to purchase computers and take 100% of the cost out of their profits before paying taxes with the accelerated capital cost allowance.

The budget will also allow manufacturers to take 50% of the cost of new machinery out of potential profits on a straight line basis before paying taxes. What will that do? That will change the financial equation for hundreds of Canadian companies that will go out and buy and install state of the art machinery to become the low cost producers of the future.

The budget also keeps in place the lower corporate taxes. Every week across the U.S., Europe and the rest of the world, CEOs make decisions on where they are going to locate the next plant or facility. Along with transportation, skilled workforce and proximity to markets, tax rates are absolutely one of the key things they look at in making that decision.

Just last year the people at Tim Hortons, Canada's iconic company, decided to bring its head office back home to Oakville, Ontario from New York state because Canada's corporate taxes had gone down to 18%. However, it was not only because of that. Remember it is consistency. It is because this year the taxes will go to 16.5% and next year they will go to 15%, the lowest rate in the G8. That is just one company of hundreds more that will come back to Canada to create jobs.

Businesses live or die with long-term planning and so must government. I shudder to think what would have happened to jobs and investment in Canada if an NDP-led coalition had prevailed on May 2.

The budget preserves and builds on the conditions for a brilliant future for Canadian trade, industry, economic opportunities for my

generation, but also for our youth, who deserve, in my view, unlimited opportunities in our great country.

Another issue the budget addresses because of its continuance is tax-free savings accounts.

I visited Taiwan last January. The people of Taiwan do not have employment insurance. They save 40% of everything they earn. Imagine the interest income they make on savings like that. Imagine the interest savings they have by not borrowing money to buy consumer goods like so many of us do in North America.

A key concern in Canada right now is our debt to net income ratio for the average Canadian family, which is around 1.5. It is a serious matter. While the Taiwanese save 40% of what they earn, Canadians spend, as a way of life, a lot more than they earn. We pay out a lot of money in interest.

That is why I believe in maintaining and growing tax-free savings accounts after introducing them in 2009. The long-term commitment to double the amount that Canadians over 18 years of age can save or invest within these accounts to \$10,000 is incredibly important for our country.

What could be a more powerful way to encourage people to save for their priorities than stop taxing the growth in savings they get from investing back into our economy? The budget maintains tax-free savings accounts and will lead to 2015 when we will double the amount Canadians can invest in these accounts without paying tax on the interest or growth.

An 18 year old who is able to save \$1,000 a year in such an account and invest it and receive a 5% return would have \$61,000 at age 48. If that same 18 year old invested \$3,000 a year and received 6% growth in Canadian stocks, the individual would have a quarter of a million dollars. At age 68, he or she would have close to \$1 million.

We know tremendous wealth will be built in Canada for individuals and our country. It makes for a far more brilliant future for our youth and our seniors. Seniors suffer when they invest their money in GICs, for example, as half of which is taken up in inflation and the other half taken up in taxes. It is a benefit to both seniors and youth.

• (1705)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Oakville seems to be an expert in economics and a whiz with numbers.

How am I going to tell my mother how to manage on \$1.68 a day, when this year the cost of heating increased by 15%, the cost of basic food increased by 15% and the cost of petroleum products increased by 25%? She gets \$1.68 a day. How is she supposed to get by on \$1.68?

[English]

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, it is worth examining and discussing with all seniors in Canada what has happened over the last few years.

Our government has provided over \$2.3 billion in tax relief to seniors and pensioners. As well, we took 85,000 seniors off the tax roles altogether. The member's mother obviously was not one of them. However, 85,000 seniors who were having difficulty paying federal tax no longer have to pay it.

We have introduced income splitting for pensioners so that they can lower their taxes and have more money in hand.

We have doubled the pension income credit to \$2,000 and increased the age credit amount. Once again, this would leave more money in seniors' hands.

Of course, the tax free savings account, for those who can afford it, provides an interest-free way to build savings and save for priorities.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the member, but I think the government has missed the mark in the area of small business and the way in which small business could contribute so much more if it had a government that was more proactive and sympathetic.

It seems that the government has looked at both small business and corporations. However, it has made the determination that the big corporations, through those tax breaks, is the way to go to generate additional job creation in the country.

Would the member acknowledge that small businesses across Canada have the potential to generate far more jobs than big corporations? Why the mix-up in overall dollar value in terms of government commitment as a priority?

• (1710)

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, this budget will benefit all businesses in Canada.

As I said earlier, we have an integrated economy. When big business suffers, they cannot buy more from their suppliers. I used restaurant, paper and computer suppliers as an example.

It is an integrated economy. When big business grows, they buy from their customers. Also, small business is grown and will continue to grow with the low-tax regime we have introduced with this government.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first opportunity I have had to stand in this Parliament I would like to thank my constituents of Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale for trusting me once more and allowing me to serve here for them.

My colleague from Oakville mentioned Tim Hortons coming back. The Ancaster business park is also blessed with Tim Hortons

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investing in a coffee grinding plant with high quality manufacturing jobs. In fact, in my colleague's riding in downtown Hamilton, Max Aicher, an international company, invested in the old rod plant of Stelco. They have a highly integrated product and have created over 100 jobs.

Since we live in a modern 21st century world where the Internet and mass travel is inexpensive, when a business starts up they compete globally. That means they have an opportunity to locate wherever they want globally.

What would happen to the jobs that have been created by these companies that were attracted here by a low tax regime if we did not have that tax regime? Where would those jobs go?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I have talked to a lot of business owners. I also talked to a lot of business owners in the early 1990s when we had an NDP government in Ontario and businesses fled the jurisdiction.

Businesses could go to South Carolina, Kentucky, or anywhere in the U.S. where there is a more favourable tax plan. They could go further afield. Sometimes they just stay within one province in Canada.

My biggest fear, as it was in the early 1990s, the jobs would go primarily to the United States.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate you on your re-election and of course your re-appointment to the chair. I would like to congratulate all members on their election to the House. Before I start, I would also like to thank the constituents of my riding, the great riding of Leeds—Grenville, who once again, for the fourth time, placed their trust in me to represent them in the House of Commons. I really am humbled by their support and I have committed to do my very best to make sure that they are well represented here and in all the work that I undertake on their behalf.

It seems like a long time ago, because we have now had two budget presentations and an election in between, but back in January I travelled throughout my riding, meeting with constituents and discussing with them what they wanted to see in this year's federal budget. I was told in January to keep working on the economy, wind down the stimulus program, keep working on job creation and eliminate the deficit and the gun registry.

I was also told that the eastern Ontario development program needed renewed funding. Homeowners required help to retrofit their homes to help reduce their energy bills, and our most vulnerable seniors required assistance. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for listening to the constituents of Leeds—Grenville when he developed the budget first on March 22 and of course his budget that was delivered just the other day.

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The residents of my historic riding are like most other Canadians. They are hard-working, they pay their taxes, they enjoy their families, their homes and their freedom and they are concerned about the economy. They play by the rules and they expect others to do the same. Our election platform, which was based on our March budget, reflected their thoughts.

There are many items in the budget that are not only welcomed by Leeds—Grenville, but they are crucial for its continued recovery. I could stand here all day and go through the budget, item by item, and explain, but my time is limited. I want to talk a little bit about a few measures in the budget that are especially crucial for the residents of Leeds—Grenville.

Even before the economic downturn, my riding was suffering from a loss of manufacturing jobs. These were jobs that had been around for generations, and families in my riding had grown up knowing that those jobs were available. At the same time the Community Futures Development Corporation was established in three locations serving my riding. The Brockville area is served mostly by the Thousand Islands Community Futures Development Corporation. In Grenville county it was served by the Grenville Community Futures Development Corporation and the other part of my riding was served by the Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation. These are the folks who deliver federal economic development funds at the community level. I have to say that this is a model of federal investment that works extremely well.

The CFDCs are operated by local people and governed by a local board of directors. They know what works in the area. They know what is needed in their communities and they have the business expertise to assist entrepreneurs to establish and grow their businesses. Their success stories are many.

In this year's budget there is a notation that the eastern Ontario development program will be continued with a commitment of \$20 million over the next two years. This program, administered by the CFDCs, not only in my riding, but in all of eastern Ontario, has been a huge success. Tom Russell is the executive director of the program at the Thousand Island CFDC in Brockville, Heather Lawless performs the same function at the Grenville CFDC, and John Doherty at the Valley Heartland CFDC, and they have provided this brief overview.

Since its inception in 2004, the Thousand Islands CDC and the Grenville CFDC have invested almost \$8 million in over 700 clients. The program provides increased access to capital for rehabilitation of vacant or underutilized commercial spaces, skills development subsidies, subsidization of expert customized business, export or marketing plans, community capacity building initiatives and incentives to attract and retain youth.

As a specific example, the EODP has played a pivotal role in developing and supporting new programs at St. Lawrence College Brockville Campus, a campus which had experienced a decline in enrolment and programming, received funding to develop and staff an art gallery which subsequently led to the creation of a performing arts program, followed by a music theatre program. These programs are now the St. Lawrence College's cornerstone, each receiving critical acclaim and each a driver in securing the future of the campus.

• (1715)

The college also recently received EODP support for the Centre for Training and Development. The centre identified a looming shortage of power engineers and EODP funding was provided to develop a power engineering program to address the shortage and further strengthen St. Lawrence College's efforts to be a leading training facility. Dozens of graduates already have meaningful employment that would previously have been unavailable to them.

Applications for funding for this renewed program have been lying in wait in the various CFDC offices serving my riding. With this budget we would be pleased to see it move forward.

I would also like to talk about another budget element that has been critical to job retention in Leeds—Grenville. That is the work sharing program. The work sharing program helps employers maintain jobs by offering employment insurance benefits to workers who are willing to work a reduced work week while their company recovers. In my hometown of Gananoque, there was a company that took advantage of this program and people remained on the job during the economic downturn.

Many thousands of workers across Canada were able to keep their jobs during the recession because of this program, throughout my riding of Leeds—Grenville and there were some right in my own hometown. I know the workers were thankful. I have heard it from them individually. In many cases these are small family-owned companies that have benefited from this program and I know they were thankful as well.

This year's budget will extend existing or terminated work sharing agreements by up to 16 weeks while the economy continues to recover and I know there are owners of manufacturing plants in my area who will be pleased to hear about this measure.

In Leeds—Grenville, as in other parts of the country, we have witnessed rapidly rising energy costs which have led to cost increases for other basic items. Especially in the winter heating season, I received letters this past year in my office from vulnerable seniors who were concerned about their cost of living. It was especially critical this past winter, which of course was long and cold. This measure was met with a great deal of support in this budget, as we promised to increase the guaranteed income supplement for these, our most vulnerable seniors.

Over the last few years, I have had many representations from local volunteer firefighters wishing to see a \$3,000 tax credit as a reward for their commitment. In my riding, similar to many other rural ridings, most of the firefighters are volunteers.

I want to read a quote from a local fire chief who reacted to the announcement of this credit. The quote is lengthy, but I will cover what needs to be said. This is from the Augusta Township fire chief, Rob Bowman, who is himself a volunteer firefighter. There are 40 volunteer firefighters in this township.

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He said: "It's very important for volunteer firefighters. These guys and gals do a lot of work for very little money. They risk their lives. It's hard for us to recruit firefighters and keep them because of the time commitment. Volunteer firefighters must leave work at a moment's notice to respond to fires and accidents. They are also held to the same standards as professional firefighters, meaning they must spend the time training. We have to meet the same legislation, but do it after work and on weekends".

Mr. Bowman believes "the tax credit will provide an incentive to counterbalance these drawbacks to becoming a volunteer firefighter. The credit will help offset other costs firefighters incur, such as gas in their vehicles to get to the scene of the fire or to the firehall, and the ruined clothes they often discover after getting out of their bunker gear when their job is done".

I think it is clear that this tax credit will be well received.

Another tax credit that is being well received is the children's arts tax credit. When our government introduced the children's fitness tax credit back in 2006, it was seen as a positive step in all of the communities in my riding. However, there are questions about arts and cultural learning experiences and why they were not recognized.

Participation in arts, cultural, recreational and developmental activities also contribute to a child's development in a positive fashion and many such programs exist in my riding. The tax credit will be provided on up to \$500 of eligible fees per child under the age of 16 or age 18 if the child also qualifies for the disability tax credit. This is a positive and welcome step in my riding.

The final point I would like to raise is the firearms licence-fee waiver. Hunting is a traditional pastime in my riding. Everyone in the riding knows not to schedule a special event during the opening week of duck hunting or deer hunting. As well, farmers maintain firearms as part of their operations.

This new budget commits \$20.9 million to waive firearms licence renewal fees for all classes of firearms. From May 2011 to May 2012, no firearms owner will have to pay to renew a licence. Leeds—Grenville not only welcomes this, but the residents look forward to hearing more news on the firearms registry, hopefully this fall.

As I mentioned at the outset, I could go item by item about this budget until we could explain why it is so popular in Leeds—Grenville and I am pleased to have this opportunity to highlight just some of the important measures that have been taken in this budget.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is almost the first time I have spoken in the House, I want to take this opportunity to quickly thank the voters, the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, very much for the trust they have placed in me. They voted for the NDP in order to have change and a presence in the House and in the riding. That is what I plan to provide. I will work as hard as I can to represent their interests.

In the Conservative budget before us, there are many measures, including tax credits, that are supposed to improve the lives of Canadian families. However, I think the budget falls quite short and the government is failing to achieve the goal of tangibly improving

life for families. I am thinking about family caregivers. A non-refundable tax credit is being offered for family caregivers, but they need immediate and concrete help. In my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier we have the Portneuf Association des proches aidants. Along with other family caregiver associations in the area, it is calling for concrete and immediate measures.

Can someone explain to me how this non-refundable tax credit is really going to give these families the means to improve their lives and how this will really provide support to family members?

[English]

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on her election and welcome her to the House of Commons. I think she has asked an excellent question.

We have recognized in this budget the importance of caregivers and there have been many measures taken. We can never do enough to help caregivers. I know of people in my riding who have had to care for sick children. We are taking measures in this budget that I know will be well-received. There is always opportunity to do more, but I think what this government has done in recognizing this in the budget is something that will be well-received. I know that it will be well-received by the constituents in Leeds—Grenville.

• (1725)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleague across the way.

I know of the member's interest with multiple sclerosis, which affects 55,000 to 75,000 Canadians. I know he is aware of new research that shows that the prevalence of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency in MS is about 90%, that there have been over 12,500 procedures performed worldwide now in 50 countries, and that they are showing an improvement in the quality of life for MS patients.

We absolutely need evidence-based medicine in Canada. That means we must collect the evidence.

I would ask him, why the refusal to undertake a nationally-funded, multi-centred clinical trial to determine if treating CCSVI will improve the quality of life for MS patients?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would like to, first, congratulate the member on her re-election and also thank her for all her efforts on behalf of those who suffer across Canada from MS.

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As the hon. member noted, I have become very familiar with the CCSVI procedure, which I see does help mitigate some of the symptoms that those who are suffering from MS have to deal with.

As the hon. member knows, we did make an announcement not that long ago of about \$100 million for brain disease research. In terms of MS, we are creating a monitoring system that will also include monitoring of those who have undertaken the CCSVI procedure out of Canada. I think this is something that many members are concerned about. I know that the government is concerned about it.

However, it is not something to be just dealt with here in the federal Parliament. It is something that the provinces are also involved with. I know that some provinces are now working on clinical trials. I know others, and myself, are continuing to encourage this across Canada because there are so many people suffering from MS. There are some in my riding and I know that the hon. member has been in contact with some of the people as well. I will continue to work hard on this issue and I thank the member for her interest in this.

[Translation]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[English]

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-appointment to the Chair. The robes look good on you. It is a good fit. The tailors in the House are obviously quite skilled and congratulations on the good job you have done from the Chair.

As it is my first time rising in the House, I wish to thank the good people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley in the northwest of British Columbia, an area a little larger than the country of Poland and stunning in its beauty and diversity. I am speaking not just about the natural environment, which is most impressive for any who have been to British Columbia, and people are most welcome at any time to the northwestern part of B.C. where residents know how to lay out a good table and roll out the invitation mat to all, but it is also a place diverse in its views, a place that has relied on the natural resources and wealth of our country to create economies generation after generation.

About 35% of my riding consists of first nations, representing some of the strongest and longest historical occupation of North America, more than 15,000 years, and since time immemorial for some, the Haida, the Haisla, the Tlingit, the Taku River, the Tlingit, the Tsimshian, proud nations that have learned over multiple generations to work in harmony with the environment, to produce an economy that sustains them, and in fact restores and replenishes that environment which we rely upon.

That is one of the things that comes first to attention and notice when looking through this budget. This is obviously one of the largest opportunities the federal government has to affect the lives of Canadians. It is one of the largest expenditures by any source, if not the largest in the country. Every year some \$280-odd billion goes out the door. The lack of accountability of the government in taking care

of some of the most fundamental concerns of Canadians is somewhat breathtaking.

Having so recently gone through an election and having met with constituents from across the country who presented concerns to members on the economy, the environment, pensions, and the public safety net that has been so eroded over the years, it is surprising to me what a missed opportunity this budget now represents to Canadians and to the government. One would have thought that rather than rehash the document from 60 days ago, the government would have reflected on what it heard from Canadians, if it was listening at all.

That brings to mind that the Prime Minister never actually took any real questions from real Canadians during the election, that the entire scripted process led to some sort of preordained public event that was meant to look like a campaign but was in fact nothing more than a public relations exercise. The failed opportunity in that was that Canadians were trying to express something to the Prime Minister and his party, suggesting that there is a need to balance the views they hold, that no one party or ideology in this place has all the answers available to us, and that we have to take from different pieces.

The helmets to hardhats is a good example of a program that was initiated by all parties, seeking a way for our veterans land in good, sustainable jobs, but it is a small piece and there are many more pieces available that we could have grasped on to. There has been much mention within the ranks of the 103 New Democrats sitting as the official opposition that four and a half million Canadians responded to the message we offered them, saying we wanted a government that was a little more caring and balanced, and that looked at the books of our economy.

The government is running two deficits now. It is not just running the fiscal deficit, it is running a social deficit as well. These programs are very quick and easy to tear down. The finance minister has contemplated a staff reduction in the federal government by as much as 30%. Cutting and slashing is easy to do. It is much more difficult to build efficiency and proper services to Canadians who are in fact paying for them.

When we look at the other side of the ledger, we see the government willy-nilly cutting the corporate tax rate another couple of points and saying this will obviously bring jobs to the economy when we compare it to the U.S., as one of my colleagues did. We are sitting below half of the corporate tax rate that the Americans are enjoying right now. There is such a thing as a law of diminishing returns. If the tax rate were 50% and we lowered it to 40%, we would see some results. If we were to lower it to 30%, we would see a few more but less. If we were to lower it to 20%, 15% or 14%, we would see less and less, to the point where we would see nothing at all.

The leader of the official opposition today, the member for Toronto—Danforth, asked a direct question of the Prime Minister about \$100 million to one oil company alone in the last budget. That is a lot of money. He asked the Prime Minister a simple question: Has the finance department done any assessment at all as to what kind of return we got back for \$100 million?

I know what kind of return we could get back for \$100 million to help seniors get out of poverty. I know what kind of return we could get back to help Canadians create the green economy that they have been so desperately looking for. We in the NDP know those facts and figures because we have done the research. If the government were to do nothing else, it should build its policies based on actual evidence as opposed to mere rhetoric.

• (1730)

We asked the government to assess the cost of its crime agenda, a very simple question. In fact, it is the same question the government put to us when we pushed for climate change legislation. It asked, "What's the program cost? Can you give us the dollar figures?"

We proposed a bill that said that the Government of Canada, every five years, should declare its intention on climate change initiatives, what it planned to do, and every five years should report back on the successes and failures of the previous five years. That is what we asked for.

The government went ballistic saying that the costs would be insane to have such an open and transparent government, as if somehow there would be a cost for being honest with the Canadian people.

Now let us reverse the tables for a moment and talk about crime. It says it is going to increase the prison population by this much. The Parliamentary Budget Officer and others have come forward to say this. We can do the math, but when we ask the government to actually put some figures forward, as to the efficacy of its crime agenda, as to the actual costs, it says that if one victim is saved then the cost is worth it. What simple-minded rhetoric.

We can do better in this place. We can bring forward evidence when making policies. When we look to this budget and ask the government to justify a further two point reduction in the corporate tax rate, it should justify it and show us the evidence or some research. There are all these folks working around the Hill and all over Parliament who are very bright. There are some folks in the finance department who are extremely accomplished. I am sure they could punch a few numbers into a calculator and then tell us what two points more gets us in terms of job creation in this country.

We can do the math quickly because in the law of diminishing returns it gets us nothing. We do not get any more if we are half of what our closest competitor is charging for business and corporate taxes. It does not pay off. For American companies working in Canada, they have to declare their profits in the United States anyway. We know this. We have been through this. We have seen governments around the world try the same mantra, replacing good politics with rhetoric.

The results are that the public sector will be starved to the point where people will seek it through the private sector. It is privatization through starvation. If the government runs down the public sector enough, when Canadians still need the services, roads, hospitals and schools, they will start to seek the private solution more and more. They are being handed this carrot that it will be better in this Shangri-La private world, that the public sector cannot deliver these things.

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The whole fundamental and basic concept of governance is to come together collectively to do what we cannot do individually. I cannot pave the road in front of my house, nor can my neighbours slap the money together to do it. We do it collectively and we see priorities from one to the other.

My kids are not in school yet, but I fund the local school in my region because I understand the value that education is expensive, but ignorance is much more expensive.

There is a fundamental concern I have when the budget is presented like this. We have a crisis in the northwest with the fishing sector. We are going to go into one of the worst fishing seasons on record. There is nothing with regard to employment insurance, which I know my friend from Acadie—Bathurst will talk about.

Instead, the Conservatives are going to cut \$57 million out of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, rather than monitoring or assisting the fishermen who are going to go broke this summer. The solution from the Conservatives is to cut another \$57 million out of a department that is already starved.

This is not a solution. This is not a practical result. We in the official opposition seek not just to oppose but to propose, to make suggestions that there are such things as investments in the public sector, that government can do things well, that government must in fact do things well and exceedingly do things better. That is the expectation from the people who put us here.

The people in the northwest have been going through a recession that many who sit in their seats would loathe to experience. I have communities that have upward of 80% unemployment. That is structural unemployment. It gets to a level where the need for assistance, the collective operation of government, is required.

We have a government that is starting to believe its own spin. It says the recession must be over, so it must be over. So it makes a budget that does not have a recession in mind.

I have news for the government. The recession is still going on in too many parts of our country. This was not a time to pull back. This was not a time to play politics with our economy. This was a time to give serious and honest consideration to the needs of people, not cutting western diversification as the minister is now going to oversee, but helping, putting it back into those places that we know create jobs, helping the small business community, and ending the handouts and freebies to the government buddies in the oil and banking sectors.

• (1735)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure in my youth to plant trees in the member's riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, so I am familiar with the economy of the region.

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I would like to ask the hon. member the following question. How many jobs and how many communities would stand to benefit from the free trade agenda proposed by the government and new trade liberalization measures with the Americas, Asia and other parts of the world? That is the only way to generate new jobs and new employment across this country, including in his riding.

Has the member done the math? Has he done the calculations? After having done them, will he not consider supporting this budget and its ambitious trade liberalization regime for those reasons?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, we absolutely have done the math in my part of the world, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome my colleague to come see the devastation that has resulted from free trade and the softwood lumber agreement. It is a loss. We have done the math. The math is that 250,000 jobs have been lost in the forestry sector and mills have closed throughout British Columbia and Alberta. We have seen those mills reopen south of the border using tax havens that were allowed for in previous Conservative budgets. The softwood lumber agreement helped fund the people who were suing us in Washington. Of the \$4.5 billion that was collected, \$3.5 billion stayed in the United States and helped fund the lawyers who are now suing us again.

We in the New Democrats are for trade. We are for fair trade. We are for trade agreements that are worked out with principles of fairness, of the environment, of the society and of the economy. However, to simply put forward free trade, as my hon. colleague said, as the only way to create jobs is a blindness of ideology that forbids the idea that evidence can be brought forward.

Exporting the raw logs of the trees that my hon. colleague planted is not good for the economy. Exporting raw bitumen out of the oil sands is a loss of 15,000 jobs for every 400,000 barrels exported. If that is the member's idea of a good economy for the future, I loath to think what else he would do to the manufacturing sector, the auto sector and the aerospace sector, sectors that we built up with good government policy, not with this mantra of free trade for all and everyone will have a chicken in their pot. It is much more complicated and better than that.

• (1740)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, welcome the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley back to the House and congratulate him on his re-election to the House.

Liberal members have been committed to corporate tax fairness for a great number of years. We proceeded with corporate tax cuts through years when the books were balanced and years when there were surplus budgets. However, now that we are in the midst of a deficit, I agree wholeheartedly with my colleague that this is not the time to cut corporate taxes.

My colleague brought forward a point in his speech on the issue of the law of diminishing return. If we had no corporate taxes that would be fabulous and there would be jobs all over the place. However, let us look at Ireland. I know my colleague is a well-read man. Ireland brought its corporate tax rate down to 13%. How is that working out for Ireland?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, as an Irish descendant, it pains me to say that the Celtic Tiger did not work out so well. It was the

law of diminishing returns on steroids. Ireland kept dropping the rate and that was celebrated as the solution by many of the more Conservative economists and by members who are sitting on the front bench of the government today. The solution is not working out so well. It creates a false economy. It creates bubbles. It creates things that cannot be sustained and then things like the public service gets absolutely annihilated because the revenue is not coming in.

I would like the member to know this. When the government cuts taxes while running a deficit, it is borrowing money for corporate tax cuts. That is what the government is doing. It is not \$1 billion off the corporate ledger. It is \$1 billion plus all of the interest payments that need to be made on that borrowed money. Canadians get the math. If people re-mortgage their house to go to Disney World, it is not \$2,000 for the trip. It is \$2,000 plus all of the interest payments.

These tax cuts cannot pay for themselves. The math will not work out because the law of returns is well since passed. We are diminishing. My fear is that in place of this argument around helping the economy, it is more of an ideology that simply says that those guys simply do not like the idea of government very much. They love the private sector in all cases. The private sector does wonderful things. However, the public sector is where we go to get our health care. It should not matter what is in a parent's wallet when they show up with a sick kid. If the government opposes it, we will stand in its way every day.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate you on having been elected as Speaker of the House of Commons. We are very proud of how you direct the House of Commons. I wish you luck.

I would like to sincerely thank the people of Acadie—Bathurst, who have put their trust in me for the sixth time. I will try to live up to their expectations. I would also like to thank the people of Quebec who brought our NDP cousins into the family fold. Welcome.

As a francophone member, I am very pleased to be part of a francophone caucus like the one we have, and I am pleased that we can work together.

And now the fun begins with the Conservative budget. Today I listened to the Prime Minister say that Canadians placed their trust in the Conservatives by giving them a large majority and the mandate to form the Government of Canada. He forgot to say that only 61% of Canadians voted. And only 41% of that 61% voted for the Conservatives, which is not that many people. Another 60% of those who voted did not put their trust in them.

The budget they tabled is cut and paste, to use tech talk. That is exactly what we got, with the exception of the \$2.1 billion promised to Quebec if there is a tax harmonization agreement.

The Budget

Let us talk about job creation. How can the Conservatives proudly claim that jobs are being created in our country when we look at what is going on in the Atlantic region today? What kind of job creation are they talking about when we see that Smurfit-Stone has shut down in Bathurst and that UPM has shut down in Miramichi? In the forestry industry, AbitibiBowater has also closed down in Dalhousie and Smurfit-Stone has shut down in New Richmond. In this little corner of our country, there are all these closures, and the Conservatives are bragging that jobs are being created. The jobs created by the Conservative government are part-time jobs at minimum wage. The government should focus on creating real jobs. What is even more insulting is that it is cutting \$15 million from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA, whose mission is to promote economic development.

Let us talk about job creation. In 2010, the Conservative government reduced the crab quotas in our region, in the Atlantic and in Quebec. The quotas went from 20,000 metric tonnes to 7,500 metric tonnes. This year, they were increased to 8,700 metric tonnes. Just two years ago, people working in the crab industry worked for at least eight weeks. That was not a lot, but now they do not work more than three or four weeks.

What did the Minister of Natural Resources have to say when I ask her about this? She said that it was New Brunswick's problem, that the government gave money to New Brunswick, and that it was up to the province to sort out its problems. That is what the Conservative government said in the House yesterday: that New Brunswick should take care of its own problems.

My office receives calls from women and men, women who have children, single mothers, who are told that if they want to work in Shippagan, they are going to have to make the short drive to Cap-Pelé, two hours away. They just have to stay there for one, two, three or four weeks and be separated from their children. That is what the Conservative government—both provincial and federal—told us. That is shameful and unacceptable.

There is nothing in this budget for employment insurance. At one time, people applying for employment insurance for the first time had to have 910 hours of work in order to qualify. The government reduced that number to 840 hours and then turned around and increased it again to 910 hours. Why? Because it had to do with workers. The government has no respect for workers. Then again, it has no problem granting large corporations tax breaks worth \$15 billion. Banks made \$20 billion in profits and paid out \$11 billion in bonuses, yet the Conservatives are giving them taxpayers' money.

• (1745)

This is completely shameful and unacceptable. It is a slap in the face. Giving tax cuts to large corporations is nothing to brag about. Even the Obama administration has said that now is not the time to give any tax cuts to large corporations that are making money.

I am sure that our constituents know that oil companies have no problem raising the price of gas to \$1.34 a litre. They want to make money and they do make money. They make billions of dollars. And these are the people getting tax breaks? This is going to create a debt that will eventually have to be paid by the government and by taxpayers. On top of that, the government is going to reduce

services. When we talk to our constituents about taxes, they understand that when taxes are lowered, services have to suffer.

In hospitals right now, people are lying in the hallways, waiting for a bed. Our constituents want services. People are applying for employment insurance and there is no one left to even answer the telephone because of federal government cutbacks. And there will be even more cutbacks. We have not seen the worst of it.

Billions of dollars have been cut and will continue to be cut on the backs of the people in order to serve the people on Bank Street in Toronto. They are the ones who will get this money. It is totally unacceptable.

Let us talk about job creation. There are jobs out west and people back home are moving west. They tell me that immigrants are being sent to work out west, in Fort McMurray, and that people from back home are being laid off and told that there is no work. However, the immigrants get to stay there. I thought an agreement had been reached whereby immigrants are hired and kept on only if there is a labour shortage. People from back home are calling me to say they would like to work out west, but they cannot because the positions have been filled by immigrants. It should not be like that. When we need immigrants during a labour shortage, then we can bring them over. However, there is currently no labour shortage, since the unemployment rate back home is 16%. People are prepared to go out west to work. Where is the program to help those people? The government could help those people.

On top of all that, the government is boasting that our seniors will receive an additional \$50 a month in the guaranteed income supplement. When you are not getting much to begin with, \$50 is not very a lot. Seniors are calling me to say that they are unable to pay their rent or electricity bills. These people are in need. Rather than giving billions of dollars to big corporations, we should be taking that money and giving it to the community, to people who have worked hard their entire lives.

As I said before, I am receiving calls. Does the government really want to promote this? To show just how anti-worker the government is, Canada Post, a crown corporation owned by the government, has just announced that in the coming weeks, it will be cutting off benefits for people who are sick and who have been granted sick leave. This means that people will not receive their medication. Why are they being punished?

The member opposite is indicating that such is not the case, but they are going to cut these benefits; they have already sent a memo about it to all employees. Canada Post has currently reduced its services to Canadians to two days a week to increase pressure to accept the collective agreement. The benefits of workers will be cut and the government is going to line the pockets of big corporations by giving them piles of money because big corporations are friends of the federal government and the Conservatives. I do not think this is right.

That is why we will not vote in favour of the government's budget. It is not a good budget. I want to remind the House that the Conservatives received only 40% of the votes of the 61% of Canadians who went to the polls.

The Budget

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would look more for clarification. In his comments, the member made reference to the fact there are many jobs in western Canada and many people living in Atlantic Canada who are looking for jobs. However, he seemed to be of the opinion that immigrants were filling those jobs in western Canada and thereby not allowing individuals from Atlantic Canada to fill those jobs.

Perhaps he could provide a bit more on that particular comment. Does he have some statistics that could clearly demonstrate that?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I get the statistics every time I take a plane. Some guy from down home will tell telling me that he cannot go back because has been laid off.

I did not take figures and use scientific statistics, but I will tell you about the calls that I get from people saying that they would like to get a job and work in their own country of Canada but that they have to go home because someone has come from another country and gets the job and now they have to go home without a job. I am getting lots of these kinds of calls in my office about people not returning, which I feel is not right. It is not the right thing to do. We should serve our people first and if we have openings for other people, we can allow that.

We brought that issue to the minister many times. We have told the minister that it is not right, but the government is not looking into it. I think it should be looking into it to ensure that Canadians work first and then after that, if we need immigrants to do work here, there will be a place for them and they will be welcomed to our country.

• (1755)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first off, I would like to welcome you to the Chair. It is great to see you back up there where you belong.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this. He continues to refer to 61% of the people in this country not voting for the Conservative government. However, our system is a democratic system and we are the government. We form a majority of the seats in this House. We have a strong, stable majority Conservative government. I would also like to remind the member that a full 70% of the people in this country also did not vote for the New Democratic Party of Canada.

There are many members of my constituency who have actually gone out west to work. They are finding gainful employment in the oil sands. Over 500,000 Canadians currently find their employment in the oil sands, many from my own riding. The New Democratic Party has said that it wants to shut down the oil sands.

I wonder if he could make a comment to the people from his riding who actually find employment in the oil sands. What does he say to them?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would say to them that they are welcome to go to work in the tar sands and that they have their jobs. What I would say, though, is that it has to be an environmentally friendly place to work.

The way the oil sands are being exploited makes no sense. There could be a better way. Personally, when I went down there, I saw piles of uncovered sulphur with particles flying in the wind. This is not right. I saw the pond located just beside the river. The companies are saying it is okay, yet it breaks down and contaminates the river. We could do things differently.

When I met with people at the University of Edmonton, they said they had some solutions, which they had told the company and the government, but were told in turn that it would cost too much and that it could not be done.

The environment is too important. The earth does not belong to us, as we are just here in passing. It belongs to the next generation and the one after that, our children. We have a responsibility to look after our children and to provide them with a healthy place to live.

That is what I tell people back home and they believe what I say because it is the right thing to say.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my hon. colleague from Acadie—Bathurst.

I listened to his passionate words and great concern about the high levels of unemployment in his riding. I am aware that some of the companies in the oil sands areas are using temporary workers under the temporary workers program, which does not allow temporary workers to accumulate any rights in Canada. For instance, the Canadian Natural Resources Horizon mine, I believe, has had up to 400 workers from China at a time.

The hon. member has raised an interesting issue here today. I am wondering how he would suggest we ensure, or should we ensure, Canadians jobs first in such Canadian projects.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, one thing I believe is that companies use immigrants as cheap labour. They do not give them the benefits they should get. That is one of the reasons they want to have 400 workers from China. Then they say to Canadians, those who are unionized with good benefits, to go home because the company does not need them.

What the government has to do is to take leadership in this area to ensure that does not happen and to serve Canadians first, instead of just using people from other countries and taking away the benefits that a human being should get and treating workers in this country the way should be, with respect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before resuming debate, I would like to remind all hon. members to direct their questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time today with my colleague, my good friend from Newmarket—Aurora.

The Budget

I want to thank the people of Wellington—Halton Hills for re-electing me as their representative in Ottawa. I am humbled by their support and I pledge to them to work my hardest to uphold the trust they have placed in me to represent them in this House, the people's House.

In the weeks up to the election on May 2, I spoke to thousands of people throughout my riding of Wellington—Halton Hills, on doorsteps and porches and over the phone. I heard consistently from these Canadians they were concerned about their jobs and economic growth. They were concerned about food and fuel prices and about a number of other economic issues.

We have heard those concerns and this Monday past, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, introduced budget 2011 in this House, a budget that addresses the concerns I heard during the election campaign and throughout this year from the Canadians I represent. On May 2, Canadians gave us a very strong mandate to continue with our economic action plan. Through their democratic votes on May 2, they decided to re-elect our government because they had confidence in the first phase of our economic action plan and wanted to see a continuation of that plan in the next phase introduced in this budget of 2011.

Today I rise in this House to support the motion by the Minister of Finance that this House does approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Budget 2011 is a plan for jobs and economic growth. It is a plan ensuring that Canadians can continue to meet the challenges we face in this ever-changing global economy. This budget responds to the concerns that I and many of my colleagues heard at the doorstep and on the front porch in the recent election. It introduces the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, building on the successes of the first phase that we introduced in January 2009.

I want to take members of this House back to give them a bit of an overview, from my perspective, of what has happened in the last three years. Just over two and a half years ago, one of the worst global recessions to hit our shores arrived in September 2008. Our government reacted swiftly to what was an unprecedented global slowdown by introducing Canada's economic action plan in its budget of January 2009. Our government's swift actions ensured that Canada's economy not only weathered the storm better than any other major developed economy in the world but also has actually emerged from this recession stronger and better positioned than any other major economy.

The facts speak for themselves. We are on the right track. Over 540,000 new jobs have been created since the recession ended in July 2009, and we have had seven quarters of positive economic growth. Our job-creation machine has been the envy of other major industrialized nations. Our job growth has not been concentrated in low-wage-paying sectors but in full-time positions in relatively high-wage industries.

While this is positive news, it is also true that many Canadians are still looking for work and the global economy remains fragile. It remains fragile because we face three major external risks as an economy. We are facing continuing turmoil in the energy markets as

a result of the unrest in the Middle East and North Africa. We are facing continuing troubles in sovereign debt markets as a result of the ongoing challenges faced by the eurozone and its sovereign debt markets. We are also facing the continuing economic aftershocks of the terrible earthquake and tsunami that hit the Japanese economy. In fact, many parts suppliers, parts companies, auto-part companies and automobile manufacturers in southern Ontario, both domestic and foreign-owned, have actually gone into shutdown mode because of sourcing problems with their components from Japan.

These risks all present an unsettled and unpredictable global economic environment. That is why it is crucial that we implement a prudent and long-term economic plan. It is crucial that we adopt the motion by the Minister of Finance because it will lay the foundation for future prosperity and build on the successes we have had as an economy and as Canadians in the last two and a half years.

●(1800)

The next phase of our economic action plan, as presented in this budget, has a number of elements that I want to highlight for members in the House. It introduces a hiring credit for small businesses to encourage them to hire new employees. It also includes a two-year extension of the 50% straight line accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers to purchase new equipment and machinery. It provides additional support for the work-sharing program that has ensured the protection of more than 277,000 workers.

It has renewed two special EI measures that have assisted Canadians in their search for a job and is providing \$420 million over the next 12 months in this area. It extends the targeted initiative for older workers, who often have a difficult time transitioning from one sector of the economy to another, to have additional support for the next couple of years.

We have also introduced a well deserved helmets to hardhats program to help transition men and women leaving our Canadian Forces into the civilian workforce. It has introduced a volunteer firefighter tax credit as well as measures to help younger Canadians by extending and enhancing the benefits for Canada student loans and grants.

These are some of the new measures that are in the budget to help Canadians with their jobs and help the Canadian economy with economic growth.

In the last few years we have introduced a number of measures to help households with the rising cost of food and fuel and the rising burden in paying bills. We have done that by reducing the taxation burden. In fact, the average family of four now receives almost \$3,100 in extra tax savings, thanks to the numerous tax reductions that we have introduced over the last number of years. This is also why the federal tax burden is now the lowest it has been in 50 years. We are building on that record in this budget by introducing additional measures.

The Budget

We are introducing an enhanced guaranteed income supplement for seniors. For a typical single senior this would mean significant new money for their monthly GIS cheques and for a senior couple it would also mean additional new money. This would help raise up more than 680,000 seniors across this country, people who have worked hard and contributed greatly to our society over their lives and now need a little extra help to meet the monthly bills they have to pay.

Also in the budget is \$400 million to help extend the eco-energy retrofit for homes program in order to help make homes more energy efficient for Canadians. This is another way that our government is going to help Canadian households tackle the rising cost of fuel.

Despite many of the external risks facing our economy, our future looks promising. Our plan is working and the next phase introduced in this budget will ensure that we are laying the foundations for prosperity for this coming decade.

The budget also contains a plan to help reduce our deficit and eliminate it in three years, a year earlier than we had originally planned. We are not going to do this by raising taxes. Our balanced budget proposal will be arrived at by conducting a strategic and operating review designed to realize substantial savings. We expect to realize \$4 billion in savings annually. Over the next three years, along with the wind-down of the stimulus money, we expect that these savings will help us balance the budget by 2014-15, a year earlier.

This is a responsible, credible approach. We have met our deficit targets for the last two years and we expect to do so in the coming three years.

I would like to finish on this final note.

Just as it is important for the Canadian government to balance its books and ensure it acts prudently on our federal debt, so too is it important that Canadian households do not increase their debt in an unsustainable way. Our government has played a strong role in that regard and I want to commend the Minister of Finance for his efforts in this area by recently reducing the maximum amortization for mortgages from 35 to 30 years and by removing the insurability under CMHC's program for home equity lines of credit. These were two prudent measures to take to slow down the increase in household debt. Canadian households and governments need to be vigilant about the levels of debt that we have taken on in recent years.

In a democracy the people are always right and a month ago the people of Canada decided to elect a stable majority Conservative government. I ask members of the House to respect the will of the Canadian people by supporting the motion that the Minister of Finance has tabled and by allowing us to lay the foundation for prosperity in the next decade.

• (1805)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on being re-elected to the House.

I have a question with regard to page 115 of the budget, where it talks about the \$400 million that the government will put into the eco-energy retrofit program. The last sentence in that short paragraph

states that further details regarding this program will be announced in the near future.

Could the hon. member tell me whether the government will reconsider the people who were affected by the cutoff date of retrofit program, which I think was back in March, in this new application?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question is, I do not know. We will have to wait until the Minister of Natural Resources releases the details of how this \$400 million one year extension of the eco-energy retrofit for homes program will work.

What I will say is that the item on page 115 falls under the rubric of protecting Canada's environment. I am quite proud that our government has, as part of the Speech from the Throne, announced its intention to establish a new urban national park in the Rouge Valley. This is great news for the residents of the greater Toronto area. It demonstrates our government's strong commitment to expanding and enhancing Canada's national park system.

• (1810)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome and congratulate the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I always appreciate the sincerity in his remarks in the House.

He mentioned the plan to reduce the deficit and he talked a lot about the restraint that had to happen, but we know there will be cuts in programs and in services to Canadians.

However, while we talk restraint in the House, the Prime Minister is having a Challenger repaired so he and the heritage minister can go to Boston to watch a hockey game, at a \$10,000 an hour cost for that Challenger jet.

How can members in the Conservative Party sit over there and talk about restraint when the Prime Minister is costing taxpayers that much money? Is it just restraint for Canadians and excesses for the cabinet? Is that what is taking place? Why will Conservatives not stand and say no to the excesses by the cabinet?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Prime Minister was unable to attend the upcoming Vancouver-Boston game in Vancouver. He, being a big hockey fan, really wanted to see the next game and the only opportunity to go and see one was in Boston. He has committed to paying the full fare of his ticket, as has the minister who is accompanying him. Therefore, he is paying his way for this ticket.

More important, we have to realize that the Prime Minister has committed to paying his way in this regard and has committed to paying his ticket. That is what Canadians know and understand, and they see through the politics being played right here.

The fact is the Prime Minister is an avid hockey fan. I am sure all Canadians are going to join him in watching this great game and ensuring that Vancouver carries the team to success in the Stanley Cup.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment and recall a bit of history. I would like to remind my colleague that former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney went to a Quebec Nordiques hockey game. He was admonished by the House and he reimbursed the cost of the plane ticket, which had been paid by the government.

Does the member believe that the Prime Minister should do the same thing?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his question.

[English]

Definitely the Prime Minister is going to reimburse the Government of Canada for the cost of his ticket. He has committed to doing that.

In fact, the Prime Minister has never accepted a free ticket to a hockey game while in office. He has always paid for each and every ticket that he has ever received. That demonstrates a high degree of ethics and accountability and it is unlike any previous government.

Members opposite need to be accepting of the facts here. The facts are that the Prime Minister is an avid hockey fan, he is paying for his hockey tickets and for the cost of his flight down there. Obviously, he cannot fly commercial. He is the head of a government of a G7 country and security requires that he flies on a government Challenger jet. Therefore, he is going to take that jet, but he is also going to pay for his ticket. I do not think any previous government can say that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment to the amendment now before the House.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the amendment to the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

The Budget

● (1840)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 1)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brousseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dussault
Easter	Eyking
Footé	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogg
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Grogg
Hassainia	Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes	Hsu
Jacob	Hyer
Karygiannis	Julian
Lamoureux	Kellway
Larose	Lapointe
Laverdière	Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Layton
Liu	Leslie
Mai	MacAulay
Martin	Marston
May	Mathysen
McGuinity	McCaullum
Michaud	McKay (Scarborough Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Moore (Abitibi-Témiscamingue)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Murray	Mulcair
Nash	Nantel
Nunez-Melo	Nicholls
Papillon	Pacetti
Pécllet	Patry
Pilon	Perrault
Rae	Quach
Ravignat	Rafferty
Regan	Raynault
Saganash	Rousseau
Savoie	Sandhu
Sellah	Scarpaleggia
Simms (Bonaville—Gander)	Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Simms (Bonaville—Gander)
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffor
Sullivan	Thibault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turner
Valeriote—133	

The Budget

NAYS

Members

Adams
Agiukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Amblar
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Fortin
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Bellavance
Bernier
Blancy
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinoope
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoeppner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lee
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski

Lunney
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Mourani
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Payne
Plamondon
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
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O'Connor
Obhrai
Opitz
Penashue
Poilievre
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Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

It being 6:43 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:44 p.m.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 9, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 9, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

● (1005)

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the spring 2011 report of the Auditor General of Canada with an addendum on environmental petitions and the status report of the Auditor General to the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2011-12

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 2012, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House

* * *

[*English*]

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2011-12

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, on behalf of my colleagues, part III of the estimates consisting of 95 reports on plans and priorities. These documents will be distributed to members of the standing committees to assist in their consideration of the spending authorities already sought in part II of the estimates.

* * *

TOBACCO REGULATIONS

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages,

proposed tobacco regulations that will strengthen package labelling requirements for cigarettes and little cigars.

The proposed regulations present 16 new enlarged health warning messages that would appear on cigarettes and little cigar packages. The proposed regulations would also prohibit the use of the terms "light" and "mild" on various tobacco products.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and the second Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum held in Tromsø, Norway, February 22 and 23, 2011.

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to reintroduce a bill to ban replacement workers or scabs during strikes and lockouts.

New Democrats have always struggled for the rights of working people and this bill represents a critical piece of that struggle. It is essential for ensuring that the right to free collective bargaining cannot be undermined.

Some may say that this is the wrong time to introduce this legislation but I would suggest that the opposite is true. As we are still struggling to come out of the great recession, the need for labour and management to work together in a spirit of co-operation, involvement and trust is greater than perhaps at any other time in our country's history. However, nothing breaks that trust more quickly than a company's ability to hire scabs during a legal strike.

I would ask all members to support this bill at all three stages so that we can finally bring the Canada Labour Code into the 21st century.

The Budget

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-206, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan (pension and benefits).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to re-introduce my bill, which will finally put a legal end to the potential for people who have been convicted of spousal homicide to derive a CPP survivor benefit from their heinous crime.

I had assumed that the long-established principle in law, that no one should be able to benefit from a crime, would also be enshrined in the eligibility criteria for government benefit programs. Imagine my surprise when I received the following correspondence which states:

I have a relative who killed his wife, served very little time for manslaughter, and is (and has been) collecting CPP survivor benefits for over 10 years. Since 1-2 women per week die at the hands of their partners, how many more men are collecting this? How is this legal?

I researched the file to verify that this could really happen and learned that there was no legal prohibition that prevents people who have been convicted of spousal homicide from collecting either the death benefit or the survivor pension. Clearly, that is a loophole that must be closed.

My bill would do precisely that. It would amend the Canada pension plan to prohibit the payment of the survivors pension, orphans benefit or death benefit to a survivor or orphan of a deceased contributor if the survivor or orphan has been convicted of the murder or manslaughter of the deceased contributor.

The integrity of the Canada pension plan is enormously important to Canadians. I know that I am not alone when I say that the very thought that someone convicted of spousal homicide could derive a monetary benefit from such a heinous crime is an issue of fundamental justice.

I trust that all members of the House will feel the same way and I look forward to the speedy passage of my bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1010)

[Translation]

WAYS AND MEANS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to put forward that I believe will receive the unanimous consent of the House.

That, notwithstanding the Order of Monday, June 6, 2011, upon adoption of the budget motion the Speaker shall not put the question on Ways and Means Motions Numbers 2 and 3 standing on the Order Paper; and, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, immediately following the adoption of the budget motion, the Speaker shall forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the Ways and Means motion tabled June 8, 2011.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a long-standing practice to adjourn the House for political party conventions and, therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on June 16, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, June 20; and on Thursday June 16, the hours of sitting and order of business of the House shall be that of a Friday provided that the time for filing of any notice be no later than 6 p.m.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Will those members who object to the motion please rise in their places.

And fewer than 25 members having risen:

The Speaker: Fewer than 25 members having risen, the motion is adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election as Speaker of the House.

I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Drummond.

The Budget

It is an honour for me to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. That is why I would like to thank the people in my riding for placing their trust in me and giving me the opportunity to sit here. I would like to tell them that I will defend their interests every day. I would also like to recognize the work done by Marc Lemay, who represented the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue for seven years.

As we can see from this budget, the government and I have differing views on the type of country that we want to build. However, since we share the same passion for our community and the same commitment to serving our constituents, I hope that the Minister of Finance will be so kind as to listen to my message and that of my community. On May 2, communities like the one I represent did not simply choose new members, they also sent a clear message to the Canadian political system. They said that we must change our old ways of doing things and do better.

In my riding, over 50% of people voted for the NDP so that families would be a priority and so that no one would fall through the cracks. Since I humbly accepted the mandate that they gave me, I can say that this budget does not defend the interests of families or the marginalized. This budget puts the interests of the most profitable banks, the big polluters and companies that are sending our jobs elsewhere first.

Up until the day before the election, I was working in a small health care centre as a clinical nurse in the intensive care unit and the emergency room. I would like to commend all the workers at the Centre de santé et de services sociaux des Aurores-Boréales who work hard every day to preserve one of the things that Canadians value most: a public health care system. I would also like to join with all the other NDP members in recognizing all the health care workers in our country.

The measure that the Minister of Finance is proposing, to forgive the student debt of doctors and nurses who work in under-served rural and remote communities, is more of a curse than a blessing.

First, it completely disregards many other health care professionals who work tirelessly for the good of our health care system, such as practical nurses, respiratory therapists, medical radiology technologists, medical laboratory technicians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and all the others I have not listed.

Second, the Minister of Finance's offer again brushes aside experienced staff who have been the backbone of healthcare for years and who, each day, work an incredible amount of overtime, quite often mandatory, at the expense of their families. This measure can attract new professionals, but it will not attract experienced staff to these under-served communities that need them so much.

Third, this measure has the potential to drive a huge wedge between the communities that are eligible and those that are not. Imagine how difficult it would be to attract staff to an ineligible hospital that is an hour away from one that is eligible. Hon. members must remember that the shortage of health care professionals is a nation-wide issue, and every community should be eligible for help.

To conclude, I would like to say that this measure will not bring any new doctors or nurses into the health care system. It will move

them to clearly under-served areas, but it will be at the expense of many other areas that will not see their situation improve in the least.

This measure will not do anything to diminish the number of health care professionals who leave, completely burnt out, after a few years of practice. And it will not do anything to reduce the long wait times in Canada's emergency rooms.

Taking action on health care means taking action on the incredible amount of work facing our health care professionals. One of this government's top priorities should be poverty because, as we all know, being poor makes it very difficult to stay healthy. All of the international health organizations agree that socio-economic status is one of the major determinants of health.

In my riding, I am very pleased that the mining boom has breathed some new life into the region. However, it has also helped create an unprecedented housing crisis. The price of houses and housing in general has increased dramatically in cities like Rouyn-Noranda and this is causing even more poverty and precarious situations for many families. Furthermore, this crisis is having a devastating effect on students, who are having a hard time finding decent housing. It is even having a negative impact on college and university recruitment in Rouyn-Noranda.

•(1015)

Since we are talking about poverty, I would be remiss not to mention the seniors of my riding, who cannot get a good night's sleep because they are worried about their retirement income and because they can no longer make ends meet, since their income is not increasing.

When this government talks about increasing the guaranteed income supplement by a maximum of \$600 a year for single seniors—that is, by \$50 a month—it is ridiculing seniors living in poverty. In 1983, when I was born, an extra \$50 a month was not enough to get someone out of poverty, so imagine now.

My region has also had to deal with unprecedented crises in forestry and agriculture. I spoke with people in my riding who lost full-time jobs and now must get by with unstable jobs and no benefits. Consider, for example, the forestry workers of Tembec or small-scale farmers who have to try to compete with multinationals.

That is why I was hoping this budget would contain job creation tax credits for SMEs that create jobs in my region, instead of tax breaks for large corporations that do not need them and that come into my region and take over or destroy my small businesses, only to send the jobs elsewhere.

In closing, I also want to talk about the first nations peoples living in my riding. Many of them have spoken to me about their concerns over health care and education. Year after year, cuts are made to their health care programs and their post-secondary education programs. It is time for this government to restore its assistance to an acceptable level in order to help the first nations educate themselves and maintain good health.

The Budget

The people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue are proud of their region and would like this government to truly support them. However, this government has instead decided to support major polluters and abandon small rural communities that are stagnating in terms of their growth.

I hope I can count on the co-operation of all members of the House to adopt practical solutions that will make a real difference in the riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. I am counting on our Prime Minister to respect the mandate that has been given to us as members of Parliament, to allow us to do our work in Parliament.

Some 4.5 million Canadians voted for the NDP. They voted to boost public pensions, to improve health care, to help families pay their bills, and to have an economy that generates new jobs and new opportunities. By voting for the NDP, Canadians have chosen an official opposition that keeps its priorities in the right place and does not hesitate to defend them. Our mandate is clear: we will propose practical solutions for families, work together to get results that will put the country on the right track, and oppose the government when it makes bad choices, and this budget is full of bad choices.

I am honoured to have been chosen to serve the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue and honoured to be able to work with all the hon. members of this House. We all come here with different skills and different priorities, but we can choose to work together in a constructive manner. Otherwise, it is regions like mine that will pay the price in this budget.

I am reaching out to this government to work co-operatively to make this budget truly serve the interests of all Canadians and naturally the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

• (1020)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome our new colleague here to the House of Commons.

I would like to reiterate that we have heard many members of the NDP say that they have positive things to say about our budget. I would like to give the new member a chance to talk about just one measure she liked regarding investments in research and development. She can choose any sector, but it must be something positive.

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Conservative budget allocates some money for research in the forestry sector. What worries me is that often, small businesses must spend huge amounts of money to be eligible for these funds. If someone is required to spend \$10,000 to receive \$5,000, he is no further ahead. What worries me is that it is difficult for small businesses to access this money because they are required to invest money in order to find someone to make the request for access to this money.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand from the hon. member's earlier comments that she was a health worker. In regard to health care, the Bloc has a position in which it would prefer to see tax point transfers as opposed to cash transfers going to public health in the province of Quebec.

Does the member have a personal opinion as to what she believes would be in Quebec's best interest?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, with respect to the \$4,000 measure to forgive student loans for nurses and family doctors, and in light of the fact that Quebec already has its own loans and grants program, I can say that these people will lose out, since Quebec has chosen to limit the number of loans and to give grants. As a result, nurses in Quebec will receive lower refunds, just because Quebec has chosen to give grants instead of allowing students to accumulate debt. This measure also puts Quebec at a disadvantage.

• (1025)

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome our colleague to the House and congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, on your new role.

The people of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, whom I represent, have indicated that there are three most pressing issues facing them today: first, affordability; second, retirement security; and third, health care.

My question is regarding retirement security. There was a lot of talk in the last Parliament about retirement security in the case of companies going bankrupt. I am surprised that there is virtually nothing in this budget about retirement security, including increases in the CPP.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on that particular issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, it is clear to me that the Canada pension plan must provide a stable solution for all Canadian seniors. Our seniors must not be living in precarious situations. The Canadian government must take action to ensure that pensions compensate Canadian workers who have worked hard their entire lives.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska has time for a very brief question.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member did not answer the parliamentary secretary's question about a positive measure in the budget. One measure is very important to the Quebec government and the general public, and that measure is the \$2.2 billion in compensation for harmonizing the sales tax.

I would like to know what she, as a member from Quebec, personally thinks about this measure. Does she intend to vote in favour of the budget so that it passes and so that this issue is settled once and for all? I would like to remind her that in April 2009, the Bloc Québécois tabled—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I must give the hon. member time to respond. She has less than 30 seconds.

The Budget

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the budget contains a measure to resolve the issue of harmonized sales tax in Quebec, but I also find it completely normal that it was included. We cannot support a budget just because it contains one positive measure. There are many other problems with this budget; for example, it does nothing to reduce poverty. That said, I am very pleased to see that the Conservatives thought to include this measure in the budget.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House for the first time on behalf of the people of Drummond. I want to thank my predecessor, Roger Pomerleau, for his excellent years of service. I also want to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election.

As an aside, I invite my colleagues to spend their summer vacation in Drummond this year. The 30th annual Mondial des Cultures is being held there from July 7 to 17.

I want to begin by thanking the people of my riding for the confidence they have shown me. I also want to acknowledge the democratic participation by a little more than 61% of the constituents of Drummond. This gesture is all the more significant considering the political cynicism that reigns across the country at this time. We certainly cannot boast about the turnout in the last election.

Why are people so uninterested in politics? Many people think their votes do not count. Since 2006, I have been encouraging people in Quebec to vote for the NDP. It is true that our chances at the time were slim, but at least I had one argument: every vote equals funding for the political party that best represents the wishes of the voters. In that sense, no voter ever loses and everyone's voice will always be heard. That is what I used to say and I often ended up convincing many people to vote as a result. Unfortunately, the Conservative Party is planning on abolishing this incentive for political participation, which just might discourage even more people from going to the polls.

Is that what the Conservative Party wants? Of course I do not think so. Then why eliminate the per-vote subsidy for political parties? The party in power could at least have a plan B for increasing voter turnout. It could consider proportional representation, for example. But no, there is nothing. It is abolishing a good formula that was working well and did not cost the public very much. What are the Conservative government's intentions? Does it want to muzzle the opposition? I hope not, because the opposition got 60% of the vote and needs to be heard. That is what Canadians want.

The Drummond riding is not lazing about when it comes to improving its environmental record. The number of environmental initiatives are increasing in the riding. I would like to mention the Mondial des Cultures again. This festival is celebrating its 30th anniversary from July 7 to 17, and all members are cordially invited to attend. Since 2005, the Mondial des Cultures has been implementing various measures to improve its ecological footprint, including things like giving away plants, planting trees, recycling, and so on. I have some great news to share about this year: these measures will allow the festival to offset 100% of the greenhouse gases emitted by all participants in this wonderful festival. Is that not fantastic? This is an excellent example of one environmentally

responsible action among many in my riding. This excellent, tangible action illustrates our desire to leave a green, healthy planet to our children and grandchildren.

Meanwhile, where is the Conservative government? What are the Prime Minister and his Minister of the Environment doing? Can my colleagues tell me? Of the 408 pages that make up the Minister of Finance's budget, only three measly pages deal with the environment. What a mistake. The Conservatives think they have a plan to stimulate growth and employment, but those things can no longer be separated from environmental considerations. On the contrary, everything is connected. They need to stop burying their heads in the sand.

What is more, a June 4, 2011, column in *Le Devoir* by Louis-Gilles Francoeur—who knows what he is talking about when it comes to the environment—ran under the following headline: *Climate change—as the urgency increases, North America ignores the problem.*

• (1030)

North America also includes Canada. He wrote in this article that the threshold of 32 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, or the peak emissions expected for 2020, which constitutes the ultimate limit that should never be surpassed, will likely be reached in 2012, nine years earlier than anticipated.

Last weekend, I was speaking to one of my constituents, Clara Hortua, who works with the Regroupement interculturel de Drummondville. She shared with me some wonderful news: she and her husband became grandparents a few weeks ago. You should have seen the look of pride and joy on her face. Do you think that Ms. Hortua wants to pass on a sick planet to her children? No. She wants us to do everything in our power to protect our planet.

Canada was required to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below the 1990 baseline. Instead, the Conservative government let the situation get completely out of hand and, in 2007, we experienced a 26% increase in greenhouse gas emissions, which was already a discrepancy of 33.8% compared to the target level set by Canada under the terms of the Kyoto protocol.

I would like to invite the Minister of the Environment to redo his homework. If he needs a good teacher, he can let me know; I am a teacher by profession. I would ask him to start by reading the Environment section of the NDP's wonderful campaign platform. He could, for example, make major investments in renewable energy. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the IPCC—estimates that, by 2050, renewable energy could meet nearly 80% of the planet's energy needs. Is this not great and wonderful? Would this not be an incredible step forward? It would be a courageous measure that would also create jobs and keep the economy going, a green, future-oriented economy. He could also implement a carbon pricing mechanism using a quota exchange system, a type of carbon exchange. We have been talking about this for years. What is Canada waiting for? Where is it? He could also invest in improving public transit. This has been talked about for a long time but nothing much is happening.

The Budget

In short, Canadians want environmental leadership. Canadians are asking the Prime Minister and his Minister of the Environment to sit down with the opposition and improve our environmental record. We cannot wait any longer. We want concrete action.

• (1035)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would once again like to welcome the newly elected hon. member.

At one point in his speech, I heard him talk about the plight of the poor, but at the same time, he is saying that we need more taxes, that taxes on the poor should be raised. He cannot have it both ways. Something must be done to improve the lives of the poor, and that is what we have done in our budget with measures like the guaranteed income supplement for seniors.

I would like to ask him to comment on the issue of the environment because we are investing \$870 million over two years in an air quality program. He read the budget, so I would like to hear his comments on just one measure in our air quality proposal that he liked.

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that yes, the government may be putting \$800 million on the table for the environment; however, how many billion dollars will be lost through tax cuts and subsidies to banks, major corporations and fossil fuel companies? That, we do not know. The government does not have money for the environment, but it has money to cut corporate taxes. That is not right; it is not responsible.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome you to your new position, we are thrilled to see you there, and to the member, that was a fine speech.

I am not noted for agreeing with Liberals too often, but Mr. Chrétien did something right when he took big money out of elections. He took money that came from unions and big business out of the elections. That took the brown bags away and levelled the playing field. Now it looks like the Conservatives want to go back to the bad old days of those brown bags. It is terrible for democracy in this country to see that happen.

The Conservatives say it is about raising taxes. We are not talking about raising taxes. We are talking about cutting the tax breaks that go to the big corporations.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I must say that abolishing the subsidy that political parties receive for each vote is a mistake. Our voter turnout in the last election—60%—was terrible. This subsidy is an incentive to vote. When my students got a mark of 60%, I was not overly congratulatory. I would tell them that they should do better. That is what we must do here. Furthermore, we run the risk of once again seeing big business exert major influence with the financing of political parties.

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke passionately about the environment and economic growth. It is in that area where I wish to pose a question.

In my riding of Charlottetown, in fact in Prince Edward Island, we have become a leader in green energy, but our aspirations in that area have been limited by the refusal in the budget and in the throne speech to provide any support for a cable between the mainland and Prince Edward Island. This is something that was committed to by the Leader of the Opposition and has been committed to repeatedly by our party in various election campaigns.

Given the hon. member's passion for the environment and for economic development, I would ask for his comment on the omission of any commitment in the budget on this particular initiative.

• (1040)

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. It is unbelievable and absurd that the Conservative government did not include more environmental measures in its budget and that it is not providing more support for the initiatives in my riding of Drummond, for example, or in my colleague's riding. The NDP had a slogan, "Let's work together", but that is not just a slogan. It is a commitment that we made. We want to work together and reach out to the Conservative Party. We are offering our help, since we know that the party needs it. The Minister of the Environment needs our help, and we would be happy to help him improve his energy record.

[English]

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your re-appointment. I served with you in the 40th Parliament, you did an excellent job and I look forward to working with you and all parliamentarians in this 41st Parliament.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Northumberland—Quinte West. I would also like to congratulate him on his second re-election to the House of Commons.

As this is my first opportunity to rise in this august chamber in the 41st Parliament, let me say with great humility what an opportunity it is to represent the constituents of Westlock—St. Paul once again. I would like to thank them for putting their trust in me to represent them for a third straight term.

It is always an honour to represent such a rich and diverse riding that encompasses everything from agriculture to the men and women who work in the oil and gas sector and the men and women in two Canadian Forces bases, Edmonton Garrison as well as 4 Wing Cold Lake. It truly is an honour to work with each and every constituent and I look forward to representing them in this 41st Parliament.

Politicians are used to getting such strong mandates in Alberta, but to get such a strong mandate across the country to bring forward the Conservatives' plan for low taxes, jobs and growth really is an opportunity, not only for my party but for our country, to show what we can really do.

The Budget

I agree with members across the way who say that we need to do something different, that we need to do politics differently and to make sure that more than 60% of people vote. However, the way to do that is not through partisan bickering. It is not being opposed to everything. It is about constructive criticism and working with the other side. Whether in a majority or minority, we all have a mandate from our constituents to work together. Even though we have a very strong mandate on this side of the House, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the next four and a half years.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who generously gave their time to work on campaigns, not only my campaign or those of my Conservative colleagues across this country, but everyone who donated their time, blood, sweat and tears to work on any election campaign. These people are truly the lifeblood of our democracy.

As Benjamin Franklin explained, "Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote." Every one of these people was well armed as each went to the polls.

I would like to take a minute to tell the people of Slave Lake, Alberta and all those affected by the devastating forest fires in my province and across the country that not only the thoughts and prayers of my family but all Canadians are still with them.

I was in Athabasca for three days where 2,800 people took 4,000 or 5,000 people into their community and housed them for three of four days. It truly was an amazing sight to see. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who took their time to donate generously to such a worthy cause. The people of Slave Lake are still in our thoughts and prayers.

Elections are quite a humbling experience, as we know quite well. As I travelled around my riding in the last election, whether I was in Westlock, Morinville, Legal or Clyde, people in my constituency wanted to know not only what I and the Prime Minister had been doing for the last five and a half years but what our plan was moving forward. They had a real recognition that Canada was faring very well on the international stage. They knew that we had a plan coming in to the recession and that we were coming out of it ahead of most other countries in the world, but they wanted to know if we have a plan going forward. They wanted to know what our plan was to help Canada come out of this fragile economic recovery.

Most of all, they were not concerned about platitudes. In the six-plus forums that I attended, people were not concerned about platitudes and political promises. They were concerned about real results for Canadians.

• (1045)

I was fortunate to be a member of a party that had already tabled a very comprehensive plan on March 22, a low tax plan for jobs and growth, a plan that I campaigned on very vigorously among my constituents. I talked to them about some important individual measures, but I was not just arguing that we had a plan to grow our way out of this economic recession by reducing taxes.

All too often it is said that these tax reductions are for the rich and for big companies, but many of these tax reductions affect companies in my communities. Small communities like Cold Lake and St. Paul in Alberta who have 4,000 or 5,000 people also have 20,

30 or 40 companies that would be affected by this, and these companies affect the number of jobs in the communities.

Canadians, Albertans and the constituents in my riding understood that. They understood that we needed to grow our way out of this. They understood that we could not penalize Canadians by taxing them more. They understood that we had to be restrained in the promises that we made to them, not only during an election campaign but also once we got back to this chamber. We cannot just promise to give more, because it has to come out of someone's pocket somewhere.

One of the individual items people who were very happy with our budget concerned the firefighter's tax credit. I sat and talked to the people in Mallaig about how important it was that we had this firefighter's tax credit, that it was not just about financial recognition for volunteer firefighters, who are really the only firefighters we have in my riding, giving countless hours, some 200 or 300 hours on call at the station.

I had the opportunity to be in Goodridge giving out medals to at least a dozen people who had served their community for over 25 years in the role of a volunteer firefighter. They said to me that the government had always promised this and had always talked about it. I was proud to be part of a government that not only promised it and talked about it, but actually put it in our budget. That budget did not get to go forward, but now we have had the opportunity to retable it and once again it is in budget 2011.

I am proud to recognize the hard work and dedication of our volunteer firefighters, not only in rural Alberta but across our country. This is not just about the financial benefit; this is about recognizing them for the hard work they do. If for no other reason, firefighters in my region should be one of the reasons members consider voting for this budget.

I also talked to seniors in St. Paul about the \$300 million for the guaranteed income supplement. I explained to them that it was not about helping seniors who already had big pensions. The seniors I spoke with wanted to make sure that the increased supplement would help the poorest of the poor seniors, those who did not have pensions, those who had not had the opportunity to contribute to the Canada pension plan as much as seniors today have or my generation will have. They wanted to make sure that this \$600 increase for single seniors and over \$800 for couples, affecting some 680,000 seniors in this country, would go through in the budget.

Once again, this is something that has been promised for many years by politicians but never really accomplished. Our government not only put it in our budget on March 22 but we have also kept it in the recent budget. If for no other reason, members across the way should think about those 680,000 seniors as they stand in the House, many of them for the first time, to vote on the budget.

The Budget

One of the predominant issues in my riding over the last five and a half years, especially in the Lakeland area, has been doctor recruitment, so much so that I actually met with a board of doctors and community volunteers who recruit doctors in our area, and municipal councillors, even some provincial MLAs, not all of whom wanted to sit on the committee. We talked about the things that we needed to do to make sure that we could get doctors in our rural communities so that we would not just be reliant on foreign-trained doctors all the time. The constituents in my riding deserve the opportunity to have just as good doctors and treatment by general practitioners as people in Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto do.

● (1050)

This is a very big issue, and when the Prime Minister saw to it and the Minister of Finance put the \$40,000 loan forgiveness for doctors in the budget of March 22, it was very well received.

Before I avoid the opposition questions, I would just like to say what a great privilege it is and how I look forward to serving under such a strong Conservative mandate.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. I hope he is not going to avoid the opposition questions. I think it would be a real surprise and a delight for us to have the Conservatives actually answer opposition questions. That is what we are looking for.

I would like to come back to the issue of firefighters, because no government has treated the firefighters with more disrespect than the Conservative government. We know, and the member knows, that six years ago in the House an NDP motion was brought forward to create a public safety officer compensation fund for our nation's firefighters and police officers. Conservatives voted for that NDP motion. That NDP motion was adopted by this Parliament. Now we have had five years of delay in the implementation of the public safety officer compensation fund.

What that means is that when firefighters or police officers pass away in the line of duty, their families are left destitute. That is a profound disrespect to the families of our nation's firefighters and police officers.

My question is very simple. When will the government act and put in place the public safety officer compensation fund to compensate the families of the firefighters and police officers who die in the line of duty?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his re-election to this House. I am glad to see that he is turned over a new leaf and is going to be such a positive force in this 41st Parliament moving forward.

What I do know about this item in the budget is the following. I talked to one of them and his son. The father had served for over 30 years as a volunteer firefighter in our area, as his son is doing now as well. When they talk about real measures that are getting done, they talk about our volunteer firefighters tax credit. They would hope, and I know, that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster would not use this as an excuse to avoid voting for this budget and taking a real step forward for volunteer firefighters in recognizing the great work they do for all Canadians across this country from sea to sea to sea.

● (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government has made the decision to shut down the Canadian Wheat Board. The impact is going to be quite significant.

Given that the member is from the prairies, surely to goodness he recognizes that a vast majority of wheat farmers on the prairies support retaining the Canadian Wheat Board.

Can the member explain why the government is moving in a direction that goes against what a majority of the farmers on the prairies want to see, the retention of the Canadian Wheat Board?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, I do know that we have a strong mandate across this country.

We have a particularly strong mandate with each and every rural riding affected by the Canadian Wheat Board. Farmers have told me that they want an option; they want the same option as farmers in Ontario have when it comes to selling their grain and wheat.

I understand that the hon. member is from downtown Winnipeg. I can explain what it means to a farmer to have \$1 billion more income across the prairies. That income would not be from subsidies but from sales that farmers would make in having the ability to directly sell their grain and wheat.

That view does not come from me but from the many reports that have been tabled on the efficiencies of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Madam Speaker, it appears to me that the opposition have quite an aversion to trying to raise funds on their own to support their election campaigns.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague could just talk a little bit more about what it is like to travel around his riding, talk to people and have people tell him that they support what he is doing and give him a cheque for \$10 or \$20, as opposed to forcing taxpayers to support parties they do not believe in.

Could my colleague talk about what it means to actually raise money for our own campaigns?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, as I went around my constituency, I found that people wanted to get rid of the per vote subsidy. They were hoping that we could do it within this four-year mandate of ours, because they do not believe that taxpayers should have to subsidize parties. They believe that party members should subsidize them.

It may be \$30 million, \$40 million or \$50 million, but if we put that money into the new horizons for seniors program or into programs that really affect every day Canadians and get real results for Canadians, that is what they expect and that is the strong mandate of this government.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be in this House once again, and an honour and a privilege to represent the good folks of Northumberland—Quinte West. I also congratulate the member for Westlock—St. Paul on his re-election.

The Budget

May I once again, from the bottom of my heart, thank all those who worked hard on our campaign to bring me back to this most august of places. What an honour and privilege it is. My commitment to all members and all citizens of Northumberland—Quinte West is to do my absolute best on their behalf.

Today, I will be highlighting the benefits of this government's sixth consecutive budget and what these benefits mean for the constituents of Northumberland—Quinte West, and all Canadians for that matter.

As members of this House will know, this government is committed to delivering a low tax plan to Canadians which will help foster job growth and economic prosperity, while supporting Canadian families and seniors.

We still live in uncertain economic times and I believe that this budget recognizes this uncertainty by taking appropriate steps to support Canadians and limit government spending.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will focus on four key areas: supporting job creation; supporting families and communities; investing in innovation, education and training; and preserving Canada's fiscal advantage.

In order to foster job growth, this government's budget will support job creation through extending the accelerated capital cost allowance by helping manufacturers make new investments in machinery and equipment; by providing a hiring credit for small businesses, which will be a one time credit of up to \$1,000, to encourage additional hiring; and by supporting youth entrepreneurs by adding \$20 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

This budget also includes initiatives that will support Canadian families and seniors. Canada's economic action plan will support seniors by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement to eligible low-income seniors who will receive an annual top up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across this great country. It will enhance the new horizons for seniors program by providing an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship, and social participation for seniors. It will also enhance the medical expense tax credit by removing the limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that could be claimed on behalf of a financially-dependent relative.

With regard to Canadian families, the government's economic action plan will support families through targeted initiatives, such as the children's arts tax credit, which will provide up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, culture and recreational activities; the family caregiver tax credit, which will provide an amount of up to \$2,000 for caregivers of loved ones with infirmities; and by extending the eco-energy retrofit homes program to help families lower their heating and electricity bills by making their homes more energy efficient.

This budget has targets and initiatives that will benefit all Canadians. However, there are also multiple aspects of this budget which benefit my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. During public consultations and throughout the election, I spoke to thousands of my constituents who wanted their voices heard in Ottawa and their priorities brought to the forefront of Canadian politics. I believe this budget is a reflection of their priorities and I

would like to outline parts of this budget that are of particular importance to my riding.

First and foremost, this government has committed \$20 million in funding over the next two years for the eastern Ontario development program. The EODP is essential for the funding and support of our local community futures development corporations. These CFDCs provide direct guidance and consultation to local businesses and help foster growth and prosperity in Northumberland—Quinte West.

Second, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, our government will support major economic sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing and the tourism sectors, with hundreds of millions of dollars in support for innovation, investment and market diversification.

● (1100)

Third, this government is committed to legislating a permanent gas tax rebate per municipality. This means a total annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for infrastructure priorities in Canadian municipalities. The rebate is also a sign that this government realizes the challenges that face low-income Canadians. As such, this rebate is an attempt to ensure that infrastructure costs are not downloaded to the local taxpayer.

Fourth, our government will establish a volunteer firefighter tax credit for firefighters who bravely serve our communities. This tax credit is of great importance to many of my constituents who live in communities that often rely on volunteer firefighters.

Finally, Ontario will see record-high major federal transfers totalling some \$17.7 billion, an increase of nearly \$7 billion from the former government. What is more, Ontario will see growing transfer support for health care with \$10.7 billion, a nearly 40% increase; and for social services, over \$4.5 billion, which is a 40% increase. The increased support will help hospitals, schools and other critical social services in Northumberland—Quinte West.

Canadians have asked and our government has listened. During the election, this government campaigned for a strong mandate from Canadians. We were always clear about what our budgetary policy would be if elected to serve the Canadian people once again.

The 2011 budget, the next phase of Canada's action plan, is a reflection of the strong mandate Canadians have given this government. The budget provides for a low tax plan that will encourage job growth while supporting Canadian seniors and families. As such, I would encourage all hon. members to support the Conservative government's 2011 federal budget.

The Budget

• (1105)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, our colleagues across the floor, the Conservatives, talk a lot about the notion of “hard working” and people who work hard. When I met several hundred small- and medium-sized business owners, it became clear that they are definitely the ones propping up the economy. Giving tax breaks to big banks is not going to prop up the economy. The owners of SMEs work very hard and they are tired. They work 16 hours a day.

Our platform included a measure to give them huge support for job creation. We talked about \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 to allow them to create jobs and hire people, so they could consider the possibility of taking a few days off this summer. Furthermore, this kind of initiative is not very costly for the public purse, because it creates jobs and ultimately, those people will pay taxes within two or three years' time.

I would like to know how my hon. colleague can justify to small- and medium-sized business owners in his riding the fact that this government has not launched a massive hiring assistance program and is instead giving banks and oil companies tax breaks once again.

[English]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Madam Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague to this House.

My hon. colleague fails to remember or did not do enough research. He will find if he does his research on previous budgets that we actually lowered taxes for small and medium-sized businesses from 12% to 11%. For those businesses, we also increased the amount they could earn before they paid those taxes.

He will have also noticed, if he read the budget closely, that there is a hiring credit of \$1,000 so small and medium-sized businesses, particularly small businesses, could have a holiday from EI premiums. I have spoken to many small-business owners in my community and sometimes it is the smaller amounts that inhibit the creation of jobs. This is one extra saving that a small business could take.

The member also forgets that in one of our previous budgets, we included in employment insurance the ability for single entrepreneurs, most of whom are women, to now have maternal benefits, so they can better operate their businesses and plan for their families and future.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member referred to the children's arts tax credit and within the same breath talked about how this budget would benefit all Canadians. However, since this is not a refundable tax credit, it means that people who are not paying taxes would get nothing from that tax credit. It seems to me that only those who are already doing well would financially benefit, but those who are not are left out to fall further behind.

Could the member explain how this benefits all Canadians?

Mr. Rick Norlock: Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome the hon. member back to the House. We both served in the previous Parliament.

The hon. member will recall previous budgets, some of which her party supported. However, since our government has taken office, we have lowered personal income tax to the extent that almost one million Canadians no longer pay federal income tax. What a benefit that is to many Canadians who are struggling to get by. In addition, we lowered the consumption tax, the GST, from 7% to 6% to 5%. Therefore, of the federal tax that they do pay, they now pay less.

I would like to talk about what this tax incentive does for the youth in our country to partake in arts and culture. Many families have two or three children. For example, for a family with two children, if the children play minor hockey, there is a tax benefit there and if they take art classes, there is also a tax benefit. Therefore, that family could have up to \$2,000 in tax benefit.

• (1110)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

As this is the first time I have stood in the 41st Parliament, I would very much like to thank the my constituents of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo who saw fit to elect me for a second time. I pledge my best to do a great job for our riding.

I would also like to mention the volunteers. Regardless of what party people support, Canadians owe a great gratitude to the volunteers who helped all members with our campaigns. They spent hours and hours over five weeks putting in signs, knocking on doors and answering telephones.

The last time I stood and spoke to the budget was on March 24. At that time, we had a minority government. Following a brief interlude, I am pleased to be back here with a strong, stable Conservative majority government and to move forward with phase two of our economic action plan.

First, it is important that we start by reflecting on the success of phase one. We had a plan and it worked. We had a global economic recession, the worst since the 1930s.

Yesterday I listened as the Leader of the Opposition asked where the job creation was. I will talk a bit about that and how phase one of the economic action plan worked. This will also lead into why phase two and the budget is so important.

If we look at Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, in the last 24 months 24 mills have reopened or have gone back to full production. The unemployment rate in Cariboo in April 2009 was 12.1%. In April 2011 it was 7.1%. Our unemployment rate in Kamloops was 10.6% in 2009. We are now down to 8.6%.

Since July 2009, 540,000 jobs have been created. Therefore, when the Leader of the Opposition asks where the job creation is, that is where it is. What is it? It is businesses getting back to work, recovering and investing.

I will give a couple of quick examples. The Canfor mill in the community of Clearwater had been closed for the last few years. It was a very difficult time for that community. It has recently announced that it will be investing \$24 million in it and it will be reopening in the fall. That is fantastic news for the community. Why will it reopen? Because it knows that it will have a competitive corporate tax rate. It is reopening because it knows there is a continuation of the accelerated capital cost depreciation so it is able to invest this money into its mill with some benefits. It will reopen because of the trade and the increased opportunities it has for its products all over the world. It is a great success story.

Another mill, Savona, has recently reopened. The job creation is coming from this.

However, we still have some work to do in moving forward. I look at the community of Valemount and its mill, which closed and moved out. That community continues to struggle and has an unemployment rate that is much too high.

It is also important to look at the legacy left by some of the stimulus program. Again in the riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo affordable housing for low income seniors has almost doubled in a couple of years. That important legacy will last forever.

Approximately two weeks ago I was at the opening of the House of Learning at Thompson Rivers University. It is a fantastic building with a new library. It is looking at supporting the aboriginal community in terms of education. We are very proud of our university and a building that was not only a partnership with the federal government, but also the provincial government and some very generous donations from community members.

• (1115)

I invite everyone to visit this fantastic facility. We used pine beetle wood. We have a centre for dialogue that is built on the old pit house formation. Hundreds can sit down in a circle and have dialogue. It is a fantastic facility and I invite everyone to see the great work we have done with the economic action plan, phase one.

As I indicated, we introduced the budget back in March and it was about moving to phase two. Phase two is about the government not being able to afford continuing to stimulate the economy. We need to support businesses to be successful, to create the wealth in the country for the programs and services that we so desperately want.

I had gone through a comprehensive process before the prebudget consultation and when the budget came out, I was delighted to see that the 10 measures we specifically asked for were included in it. We have had five weeks on the election trail, which was another opportunity for me to find out if we had captured what people wanted and were we moving forward in the right direction. This is what I heard over the five weeks, which reaffirmed the prebudget consultation. The budget presented back in March was a budget for Canada, for Canadians and for moving forward toward success.

The Budget

One of the things that was very important to my riding was the move back to balanced budgets and to look at finding some savings within government. I looked at what some of my companies had to do because they were struggling. I believe that 5% is a very doable number and will lead us back to a very strong fiscal position.

One of the things I was privileged to participate in is the Red Tape Reduction Commission. It started the work back in January. We have had 10 round tables across the country. There has been a number of sessions. It is comprised of representatives of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and six members of Parliament. We have finished our consultations. We are ready to start to move toward reducing the red tape burden on our small businesses. There are many fantastic ideas that I know will be successful.

There are so many great things to talk about and so little time. We have a moderate and modest blueprint to eliminate the deficit, ensure we keep taxes low and targeted investments that support jobs and growth and also improve the quality of life for seniors, families and children.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome back the representative from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I am pleased to hear that she has looked into the budget very thoroughly.

One thing troubles me about the budget, and I do not think it will come as any surprise because I spoke endlessly in the last Parliament. There are some 250,000 to 300,000 seniors who are living below the poverty line, most of those being women. They are living on \$1,162 a month. The increases proposed by the government, and I give it credit for doing something, is only \$50 a month. When a person is trying to survive on \$1,162, it does not go far enough. It is targeted to 680,000. Instead, it should be \$700 million to 250,000 to 300,000.

I have one other point I would like to make. The member talked about housing. Many seniors who are in assisted housing and receive any kind of an increase have it clawed back. I hope the finance minister will be talking to provincial ministers about that.

• (1120)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, the hon. member has raised a very important question around seniors who have worked very hard and who are struggling on guaranteed income supplement and old age security. That is why we increased that amount.

People diminish the amount and the value of it. When I talk to seniors, they say that it is a month's rent and they will now have money to buy presents for my grandchildren. Looking forward, one of the reasons we need to move this process forward and get the budget implementation act through is so we can start delivering those additional funds to seniors right away.

The other thing that is very important is the new horizons program for seniors and the additional dollars for that. I have groups that have really had tremendous benefit from that program.

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Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the hon. member back to the chamber and congratulate her on her re-election.

The member for Northumberland—Quinte West talked about the tax credit for firefighters. When I first saw that, I was very pleased. A former colleague, Rick Casson, the member for Lethbridge, did a lot of work on it. I worked with Rick on a couple of different initiatives, as well as the member for Malpeque. It looked like a pretty good thing.

The budget has a number of initiatives that look like roses, but there is a bunch of thorns around them. When I saw the tax deduction for firefighters, I thought it was a great step. However, when one gets into the details, one sees that it is a non-refundable tax credit.

There are 50 firefighters in my riding of Cape Breton—Canso. Firefighters who make less than \$22,000 are not eligible. They do the same job, they take the same risks, but they get no benefit. They have to choose between the \$1,000 honorarium deduction or this. Does the member see the injustice in that application?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, many in the House were incredibly supportive of the volunteer firefighter tax credit and were delighted to see it in this budget.

There are probably 16 volunteer firefighter departments throughout my riding, which I visited during the election campaign. They were, without question, absolutely delighted to see it included in the budget. I am pleased to be part of a government that is finally moving forward on this issue.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for coming back to the House to work alongside me on the finance committee.

I would like to take an opportunity to address the fact that in the last Parliament the Liberal Party was very much against what Mr. Rick Casson had put forward for the firefighters of our country, and this measure is going to help them.

Could she continue to talk about the need to proceed with this volunteer firefighter tax credit, given that the Liberals voted against it?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is providing misinformation in the House. The Liberals never opposed the volunteer firefighter initiative, not at all. She should stand and be honest.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member, but I believe that is a question of debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, all I can say is when I visited the volunteer firefighter departments, they were absolutely thrilled with our government moving forward on this initiative.

• (1125)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I am rising on the last point of order. Though I know you ruled on it, I would like to take this

opportunity to say that if the Liberal Party would like me to table a list of the members who voted against it, I am happy to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: As I said, I believe this is a point for debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to extend sincere appreciation to the constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain who have re-elected me yet again, in 2004-06 and 2008-11, with the highest percentage of votes in Saskatchewan. I am humbled by their support and I will do my utmost to continue to deserve their support and will do what I can to represent them fairly and to the best of my ability.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers who campaigned with me, the board of directors and of course my thanks to my wife Sally who has been a tremendous help and support on every campaign, an ever ready partner particularly on this campaign and during my stay here in Ottawa. I know that spouses make life here bearable and they certainly stand with us.

I must also mention the difficult circumstances in which the residents of Souris—Moose Mountain find themselves. Mostly throughout my riding after a very wet fall last year, we have experienced above average snowfall and rainfall and more rain that has caused flooding of farmland, damage to homes including on reserves, a heartbreaking loss of property and cattle. Land that was once seeded is now five feet under water. Areas around Estevan, including homes, have suffered much damage. It is a frustrating and dire situation. Many are tired and frustrated. Rural municipalities and villages are fighting water, doing their best, cutting roads and doing what they have to in order to preserve towns and villages.

This government, along with the provinces, has disaster relief programs in place, income protection and business risk management programs. I am hoping the programs will address these losses and provide a basis for recovery next year.

This budget sets the stage for Canada's future prosperity and a better future for all Canadians. The steps taken now will preserve jobs and continue Canada's economic growth into the future. These steps must, of course, be placed in context. Before the global recession hit, our Conservative government paid down nearly \$40 billion of debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years.

While other countries struggle with an ever-increasing debt that is spiraling out of control, Canada has one of the best fiscal positions in the G7. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire G7. The independent International Monetary Fund has stated, "Canada's overall fiscal outlook in the aftermath of the crisis stands out as among the best in the G20".

Since July 2009, nearly 540,000 new jobs were created. For our future prosperity, it is important to do the right thing and take the right steps at the right time. First we paid down debt and then when the recession hit we made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit to protect our economy and jobs.

Now is not a time to spend, but rather a time to return to balanced budgets and the budget sets out a plan to do so by winding down the temporary stimulus spending, putting in place targeted spending restraint measures and reviewing government overhead costs in order to balance the budget by 2014-15. This is in stark contrast to the NDP and Liberal Parties that would increase taxes by billions. In the case of the NDP, campaign promises were made to the tune of \$60 billion. Both are just plain wrong.

Canadians have spoken loud and clear on this subject by electing a majority Conservative government.

With respect to the budget, Saskatchewan finance minister, Ken Krawetz, said, "We're pleased to see there was no deviation from the plan" and that the first budget was an "OK budget" and this one is as well. "It's not a spend, spend budget...but it's a cautionary budget. I think that's a good example for the province of Saskatchewan".

In particular, he welcomed tax breaks for specific groups such as the volunteer firefighters, family members who act as caregivers and families whose children attend music camp or art classes. He was most relieved with the commitment to keep increasing health care transfers to the provinces by 10% annually. We will not do what the Liberals did and that is balance the books on the backs of ordinary Canadians, RMs, municipalities and provinces.

We must also place this budget in the context of the previous budgets. We cut taxes over 120 times. We cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We removed over one million Canadians from the tax roles. We increased the amount that Canadians can earn tax-free. We reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of the average family. We introduced a universal child care benefit, offering families more choices for child care by providing \$1,200 a year for each child under age six. Total tax reductions for an average family of four approximate \$3,000.

● (1130)

The new budget builds on this foundation with measures such as enhancing the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$600 for single seniors and up to \$840 per couple per year.

I am not sure whether the NDP will support this or not, but I would certainly encourage them to support this budget. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP, said to CTV news on June 6, 2011 that they were very happy and that this issue has been an issue that they have raised many times before and it is finally something that is being addressed.

Another measure is the new family caregiver tax credit for those who care for a dependent family member who is infirm. Here is what the Canadian Caregiver Coalition had to say:

On behalf of the millions of family caregivers across the country, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) applauds the federal government for their recognition of the tremendous time and resources required of family caregivers.

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This is the kind of initiative that should have been supported when the budget was handed down in this House in March. It is the kind of initiative that should be supported now.

There is also a provision to forgive up to \$40,000 in student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses serving underserved rural and remote communities.

As mentioned, there is the \$3,000 volunteer firefighter tax credit. Here is what the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs had to say in a news release on June 6, 2011:

We were delighted...This measure will help with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters across the country—

Of course we extended the eco-energy retrofit homes program.

I would say at this point that the NDP resistance should either collapse or capitulate. I would encourage the members to support this budget.

There are even more measures that include: a new hiring credit of up to \$1,000 for small businesses to support local job growth; a permanent annual investment of approximately \$2 billion in gas tax money to provide stable funding to municipalities; ongoing funding to the Canada periodical fund to continue to support the distribution of publications in Saskatchewan and across the country; and \$60 million to the CBC/Radio-Canada in 2011-12 to provide radio and television services, and this will certainly be welcomed by the many CBC supporters in Souris—Moose Mountain.

Finally, it is heartwarming and good to see our government's commitment to end the wasteful and inefficient long gun registry, and to ensure western Canadian farmers have the freedom to sell wheat and barley on the open market.

Something that is also well received is a commitment to limit Senate terms and to phase out direct taxpayer subsidies to federal political parties over the next three years.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation had this to say on June 6:

Eliminating the per-vote subsidy is a major victory in the fight against political welfare...this is major win for taxpayers and for democratic reform.

All in all, the budget contains positive steps that will move Canada forward in the right direction. It would ensure a strong economy. It would ensure that jobs are created. In fact the budget sets the stage for Canada's future prosperity and a better future for all Canadians.

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I would ask all members from the opposition to join with us to ensure the speedy passage of the budget and to show Canadians that indeed they are working together with this government to help all Canadians have a better life and better lifestyle.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear from the member across regarding his government's agenda, especially when it comes to the economy.

I would like to ask, as a fellow member of Parliament from western Canada, how that view truly reconciles with the plan to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board which supports the livelihoods of not just farmers but rural communities all across western Canada?

Further, how does the member feel about his government's cutback of western economic diversification which is absolutely critical especially in the diversification of rural areas across Manitoba and Saskatchewan in a very large way?

Instead of seeing a strong commitment to economic development in the west, what we are seeing are the most intense cuts affecting our area.

I would like to hear how that might actually oppose the government's agenda when it comes to economic development.

• (1135)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, this government's record of economic development and creating opportunities is stellar across the country from coast to coast to coast. There is no question about that. In fact, many of the initiatives that were taken were not supported by members opposite.

With respect to the Canadian Wheat Board, it is rather interesting that west of Manitoba farmers do not have an opportunity to sell their produce where they would like to sell it at the best or highest prices. For instance, anyone growing durum in Saskatchewan would have to sell through the Wheat Board at dollars per bushel less than they might in the United States.

It is simply a question of fairness. Those farmers who wish to continue to deal with the Canadian Wheat Board can so, but that should not prevent the farmers who want to deal with the issue on their own or through other agencies or bodies from doing so. This is something that should be encouraged.

I do not know of anywhere else in the world where farmers are forced to sell their product to only one source. It does not seem to make sense. In today's world, we need to give farmers the opportunity to do the best they can.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with interest and I have a question for him.

Government is giving a major tax break to corporations that already have a competitive tax rate and is proposing to balance the books through attrition, which means cutting the civil servants who provide services to Canadians. How is that not balancing the books on the backs of ordinary Canadians?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, with respect to not balancing the books on the backs of Canadians, we did not cut transfers to the provinces by \$25 billion like the previous Liberal

government or raid the EI account of \$50 billion to pay for the deficit.

When we are dealing with corporations it is not just corporations but the vehicle by which jobs are created so that everyone in the country can work. Here is what the Financial Executives International Canada had to say:

FEI Canada is pleased with the budget's proposed initiatives to eliminate the deficit by 2015-16 without raising taxes or reversing previously announced corporate tax decreases, measures which will foster economic growth for the benefit of all Canadians.

Also, Deloitte Canada said: "Canada's position as an attractive business destination for global enterprise—". It allows those who choose to proceed with planned corporate tax reductions. It sends a signal that Canada is a friendly place to invest, both foreign and domestic.

This is the type of thing that encourages investment, builds jobs, builds opportunities for Canadians and is something that the opposition should support.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saenich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, to the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain, my condolences to the farmers in your riding for suffering the ravages of climate change.

I have a brief question relating to the member's comment about political subsidies. I refer the member to page 184 of the budget which makes it clear that taxpayer support comes in three ways. I would ask why your government has chosen to pursue the very smallest and most fair application of public support to political parties?

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask all members to direct their questions through the Speaker.

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain has 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, it is a good first step. Certainly it goes into the millions of dollars and encourages members of Parliament and parties to raise money like everyone else. There are already provisions made to allow parties to receive money so they can exist. This requires a little initiative, a little effort, to raise money. I would encourage the member to get behind this particular proposal in the budget and support it.

• (1140)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate all returning and new members. I thank the citizens of Vancouver Quadra for electing me for a third time. I also thank my campaign team and all the volunteers who were so much fun to work with. I had the real pleasure of meeting with constituents from one end of the riding to the other in the last campaign.

The beginning of a new Parliament is always a critical juncture for Canada. It offers the governing party the chance to present a new vision, an exciting vision, a vision that addresses Canada's future. Unfortunately, the government has woefully failed to do that. In fact, it has presented its retread budget that is complacent fiscally, disappointingly regressive socially and worrisome environmentally. It is a budget that promotes ideology over evidence in a number of ways.

It is the government's responsibility to represent all Canadians, not just a select number of Canadians. As an opposition MP, it is my responsibility to hold the government to account, something that I will do rigorously on behalf of the constituents of Vancouver Quadra who elected me to do just that.

I do want to give credit where it is due. This is a budget that has incorporated some ideas, programs and proposals from the Liberal Party of Canada, and we are glad to see them in the budget. They were good ideas and here they are, perhaps a paler version than the Liberal Party proposed and perhaps in a slightly more regressive version but, nonetheless, things like the permanent gas tax revenue to municipalities, a small amount of relief for small businesses, home care, tax credits for volunteer firefighters and a bounce back of the eco-energy program, which the government has flip-flopped on several times already. However, it is a good thing that we have it for another year or two. I congratulate the Conservatives for listening to what that Liberals proposed.

However, the budget is absolutely not good enough. What I mean when I say that it is fiscally complacent is that the growth projections are outdated, there is no reserve in case things go sideways on the international stage and there are many risks that might happen.

The Asia Pacific Gateway, which is so critical to Canada's future, particularly to Vancouver Quadra in British Columbia, did not even deserve lip service in the throne speech.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Malpeque.

There is no long-term vision for prosperity in the budget and certainly no focus on the green economy, which any sensible government would see as being key to our future. In fact, the presidential candidate in France is running on the platform that if we do not address climate change and natural resource management we will not have the future prosperity that could be shared to have an equitable society.

The Conservative government does even give a nod to the importance of a green economy. Instead, there are tax cuts for large companies, like the oil and gas industry, tax cuts that are not required for competitiveness. There is very little evidence that these tax cuts will actually create jobs.

The budget is fiscally complacent and, unfortunately, socially regressive. This is a budget that contributes to inequality. I mentioned in earlier questions that the non-refundable tax credits leave out those very Canadians who need support the most.

What message is the government trying to send? Is the message that if one is not doing well financially, too bad? It will hand out some goodies but people should not even bother getting in line. That is the message that these regressive tax credits send, and that is very disappointing in the 21st century.

The budget fails to address the shameful realities faced by aboriginal communities throughout Canada.

• (1145)

I noticed an article in the paper today in which the minister responsible was patting the government on the back and saying that

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for the first time there is a government agreement to engage aboriginal peoples on these issues. That is complete nonsense. The Kelowna accord was the fruit of a whole year of working with aboriginal organizations and representatives. It actually was signed by all the provinces and territories in Canada to deliver benefits and to address the shameful conditions in aboriginal communities.

These kinds of socially regressive policies are completely regrettable at a time when we are seeing the large companies receiving a tax break that they do not need for their competitiveness.

How about honesty, transparency and the use of evidence in this budget? Once again, unfortunately, we are not told what will be cut. The finance minister will not or cannot explain the \$11 billion in cuts. It is a "trust me" budget. In British Columbia, we actually call this kind of budget a "fudge it budget" because there is no clarity.

We know this not just about attrition. Attrition is fewer civil servants providing services. In Vancouver Quadra, we care deeply about the plight of sockeye salmon. There simply has not been enough research in the fisheries department over the years to know what is happening with our sockeye salmon. How will the constituents of Vancouver feel about being told that this budget is a great one because it will achieve its deficit targets through attrition, which means loss of researchers, loss of fisheries people and loss of the ability to actually identify the problem with our sockeye salmon and correct it?

The government is pretending that it is fat being cut. However, my constituents do not actually see it that way. I received a passionate letter from a constituent whose father is a veteran in his nineties. He served in the second world war, had an armed forces career all his life and is not getting the benefits that he is actually entitled to from Veterans Affairs. I gets worse. This gentleman has been homebound, not because he could not be independent, but because the very services he was promised in May 2010 were not provided because of cuts and attrition in Veterans Affairs.

I will just quote with regard to this situation:

This is a truly sad example of what budget restraints can do to the most vulnerable. To do to people who are old, disabled and who have served our country without hesitation when they were needed, is unconscionable. I am ashamed we are treating veterans this way. Please help bring the situation to the attention of the proper resources in Ottawa.

That is what these bland words of cutting fat and attrition really are. They really are affecting people. For someone to be homebound and not receiving services but who could be independent if the services that were agreed to were actually delivered is shocking and a sad situation.

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I also want to touch on ideology ahead of evidence. We have a minister responsible for these budget cuts who actually created a giant pork barrel in his own riding and who, according to the Auditor General, deliberately kept public servants in the dark about how the projects were approved. Millions of dollars were taken from a fund designed to reduce border congestion and approved for that purpose and then used for toilets and park benches in the minister's riding hundreds of kilometres from the border. That is shocking. That minister was then re-appointed. How hypocritical is that?

We have had many prime ministers in the past who fought for a future that would allow all Canadians to succeed and all communities and regions to thrive and prosper. The current government is one that is cutting the regional economic development programs that support communities and jobs and, instead, shovelling the money to the corporations that do not actually need it at this point.

Prosperity means nothing if it is not shared. We need to create prosperity and we need to share the prosperity so that all Canadians have a chance to pursue their goals, to have their lives work and to contribute to Canada. This budget does not do that and I will not be supporting it.

• (1150)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her election to the House.

She made reference to a real gap in the budget with regard to the investment in aboriginal people's programs and investments that their communities are depending on. As she pointed out, the reality that aboriginal people face is a very difficult one across our country.

Given the government's complete lack of not only leadership but investment in critical needs when it comes to education, health, housing, water and sewer services that are at third world living conditions in some of the communities I represent, would she not agree that, as the aboriginal communities grow, these issues will become more difficult and their lives will be more challenging under the watch of the Conservative government?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member pointing out the future of aboriginals as we go forward with a program like the government is proposing with a 45% cut in aboriginal housing. How can that be defended?

I have been to Iqaluit and a number of aboriginal communities and I know there is disappointment and despair in those communities. The government is doing nothing except patting itself on the back. It has cut the very programs and agreements that were intended to address this shameful inequality many years ago.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Madam Speaker, once again it is a pleasure to welcome my friend back to this most august of places.

I understand many of the issues that she has raised. It was part of her party's platform and that is why she is here. I am here to put forward my party's platform as part of the government.

However, I somewhat bristled when she mentioned veterans and their plight. It was under a previous Liberal government that 3,500 allied veterans were removed from the veterans list. We reinstated them. There were 3,500 veterans who were stripped from the list. It

was a Liberal government that cut benefits to veterans. Some parts of the VIP program were taken from them.

She said that her constituent was having issues with Veterans Affairs. I can assure the member that when my constituents come to see me, I advise them of the appeal processes. I hold their hands and we walk right through the process. I would say that almost all the time, if they are dealing with legitimate issues such as benefits being taken from them that they are entitled to, we get them.

I wonder if she could explain to me why the Liberals took 3,500 veterans off the veterans list.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I will first note that the member may be here to promote his government's platform but I am here to serve the constituents of Vancouver Quadra.

I will read another quote regarding the situation with Veterans Affairs. It reads, "The problem seems to stem from the Veterans Affairs' staff being overwhelmed with excessive numbers of cases to handle". This constituent received approval for the benefits that were being proposed by the physiotherapist. Everything that could be done was done, except for delivering what was agreed. We are working on that, but because of the attrition and the cuts, there are impacts on individuals that are unacceptable. That is the government's approach to eliminating the deficit. It is mostly necessary because of the reduction of the tax rates for the large businesses that are already competitive.

• (1155)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to express my profound thanks and appreciation to the constituents of Malpeque for having demonstrated their confidence in me in this, my seventh, election. It is an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity once again to represent the riding of Malpeque in the House of Commons. As always, I am committed to taking their specific issues forward, to work on their cases and to aggressively put forward issues that I think would benefit Canadians.

The questions my constituents want answered, and which I attempted to find answers for during the election campaign, rise from the intentions of the government, outlined in its projected estimates and budget.

The new budget is basically the same as the old budget we were questioning when it was tabled, just a little bit worse. One thing I will admit the government is fairly famous for is changing language, trying to make things sound like something they are not.

On page 218 of the budget tabled in this 41st Parliament is a table covering strategic review savings. Really, we have to be clear on this: strategic review savings are not really strategic review savings but serious cuts. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will be cut by \$31.9 million over three years, and that is only one of the agencies. All of the regional agencies are to be cut, the one in Quebec and the one in western Canada. Regional development is there to assist the regions, to give them the opportunity to have economic opportunity and prosperity for their citizens, and what does the government do instead of investing in those agencies and investing in people? It is cutting them, and cutting the one in Atlantic Canada by \$31.9 million.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is another very important department for Atlantic Canada and all of Canada, including central Canada and the B.C. coast. What is the government going to do to Fisheries and Oceans Canada in terms of cuts? It will cut \$84.8 million over three years. That is a department that is supposed to provide safety for the fishermen, to provide opportunity for them in terms of the fisheries industries.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is another extremely important department for the country moving ahead.

As people are being laid off, the government likes to talk about the jobs it has created, but what it does do not tell us is where full-time jobs have been lost. What we have in this country in their place are part-time jobs, lower paying part-time jobs, as a result of this Conservative regime over the last five years.

Instead of maintaining services under Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, giving people extra training and assisting them to get better education so they can improve their jobs and their pay scales, the government will cut \$495.1 million from the department over three years.

Industry Canada is to be cut, as well as Infrastructure Canada, which is very important. If we are to have a prosperous country, we have to design and develop infrastructure. What does the budget do? It will cut \$124.4 million.

It is absolutely unbelievable, but the government's language to Canadians is that these are strategic review savings. No, these are cuts to the very services and programs that Canadians need and desire so they can become prosperous individuals, and it is done in a time of deficit.

Yes, at one point in time, corporate taxes needed to be lowered, but when we lower corporate taxes we should not be borrowing money from our grandchildren to do so. That is what the government is doing, cutting services to Canadians and borrowing money from our grandchildren in order to give the wealthiest corporations in Canada greater tax cuts, \$4 billion in fact, so they can return greater profits to their shareholders.

• (1200)

The proof is in about the tax cuts over the last number of years. They did not create jobs and did not increase productivity, and the companies that received them from our previous government, and this one as well, did not make the proper investments from these tax breaks.

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The fact of the matter is that corporate taxes in Canada are 25% below those in the United States, so our corporate tax rates are already very competitive.

The Prime Minister has claimed that his government will maintain the core services of Canadians. Therefore, the question remains, what are the core services?

When asked to define core services, the Prime Minister made reference only to health transfers to provinces and CPP benefits. Following that logic, obviously everything else is on the table. That is what concerns me.

Following the Prime Minister's own statements, there are likely few programs or services that Canadians will not see negatively impacted. The only issue is why does this Prime Minister and this government not have the integrity or the courage to tell Canadians what they intend to eliminate?

Let us take a look at some of the facts. In my province, Fisheries and Oceans is very important. Small craft harbour spending is critical to the safety of fisherman in that province. In the budget of March 22, it was announced that beginning this year, DFO will be cut by \$84.8 million. What will be lost? In the spending plans for DFO released on March 1, the budget for small craft harbours will be cut by 44% in the coming years.

On March 15, the then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans made a commitment that \$72.4 million would be spent on repairing storm damaged harbours, of which \$6.5 million would go to P.E.I. However, as is so often the case on that side of the House, what the minister failed to say was that it was really not an immediate commitment but spending over three years. Furthermore, the minister also failed to tell us that only \$15 million would appear in the budget, and it is in this budget, for small craft harbours across the country. As well, the minister failed to say that \$14 million would be spent on storm damaged harbours this year and only \$1 million next year.

The question is this. Where is the missing \$57 million in that specific example? I raise that example to make a point. I believe my colleague talked earlier about fudging the numbers, and that is what this government is up to.

However, what is very serious for this country is the fact that the Prime Minister will not commit to what he means by core services. Canadians need to know. We need to have some answers from the Prime Minister on what areas he will cut.

I see some of my colleagues on the other side from the previous parliament's agriculture committee. We already know from the estimates that he is cutting \$418 million from agriculture programs.

Why will the government not in fact tell us?

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The last point I would like to make is critical to P.E.I. The Prime Minister went across the country and announced some mega energy projects. However, it was the Prime Minister who cancelled the third cable from P.E.I. to the mainland when he first became Prime Minister, a signed agreement between the previous premier Pat Binns and the previous Liberal Government of Canada. Just a few months ago, when he was dealing with the megaproject for a cable running across from the Churchill River to the Maritimes, the Prime Minister had an opportunity to make the commitment to reconnect P.E.I. to that cable, and he failed to do so.

What does this Prime Minister have against Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada? I ask his colleagues on the other side of the House to be honest with us and tell us exactly what will be cut in this \$11 billion worth of cuts to Canadians. Be honest with us and give us some straightforward answers.

● (1205)

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be honest. I do remember the cuts made by the former Liberal government to the provinces and municipalities. It was very hard on health care distribution in our province of Alberta.

What I also am proud of is that we are part of a government that is increasing health, social and education transfers by 6%.

The member was the former agriculture critic for the Liberal Party of Canada. He created their agriculture policy, which was soundly defeated and rejected by western Canadian farmers.

Will he now stand up and admit that our government has a strong mandate from Canadians, particularly western Canadian farmers, given that we hold every seat on the prairies, to move forward with our mandate and changes to agriculture and agriculture policy?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, in his preamble, my colleague referred to cuts made by the Liberal government in 1995 when we were left with a \$42 billion deficit by the Mulroney government. The country was basically seen as bankrupt by stockholders on the New York Stock Exchange.

The members opposite should almost be kissing the shoes of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin every day for giving them the opportunity to come into government with a surplus. The only problem is that they have taken that surplus and driven this country into a \$56 billion debt. Instead of doing things for Canadians, the Conservatives are giving corporations tax cuts and taxing our grandchildren down the road. They should be ashamed of themselves.

If I have time, I would like to discuss the Wheat Board.

I challenge the member opposite. Call a plebiscite on the Wheat Board and we will support what farmers want. The fact of the matter is that an election is not a plebiscite on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think any member of this House would want to kiss the feet of any former Liberal leader.

However, I did want to come back to the point the member raised. He said that people in Atlantic Canada feel left out. Certainly, people in western Canada feel left out by the government. We have the government talking about massive cutbacks to our fisheries

programs. As the member knows, we have seen in Pacific Canada a virtual collapse of the sockeye salmon run.

We are seeing cutbacks in agricultural supports, and we know that Alberta has the lowest farm receipts of any province in the country. That is after a couple of decades of provincial Conservative rule and half a decade of federal Conservative rule. Where are the farmers faring the worst? They are faring the worst in Alberta. So what does the government propose? It proposes gutting the Canadian Wheat Board when we know full well that farmers have just voted to reinforce it and to have a board of directors that actually supports the Canadian Wheat Board.

The Conservatives are certainly not working in the farmers' interests. They are certainly not working in western Canadians' interests.

Could the member comment on the direction of the government?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing on the direction of the government from the Minister of Agriculture, no doubt encouraged by the Prime Minister, is an absolute affront to democracy, an affront to farm power and an affront to farm power in the marketplace.

The Canadian Wheat Board maximizes the returns back to primary producers from the international marketplace. That is why it is there. It was supported in the last election. Indeed, 80% of the elected directors are pro-Wheat Board. That tells us there is strong support from the farm sector.

However, rather than abiding by democratic principles and giving farmers a say, the government is looking at trying to violate the law, getting around the law and bringing something into this House and killing the Canadian Wheat Board. It is as simple as that.

I ask the members opposite, what is going to happen to producer cars? What is going to happen to the government guarantee under the Canadian Wheat Board?

The backbenchers on the other side, who never can speak for themselves in this House of Commons, have to accept their responsibility for taking away farm marketing power for primary producers in the marketplace. That is the albatross that will be hung around the Conservatives' neck if they continue with this silly decision to destroy organized marketing in this country.

● (1210)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time speaking in the 41st Parliament, first let me congratulate you on being appointed assistant deputy chair of committee of the whole. I also congratulate all the new members in this House.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Calgary East for sending me to this House again for the sixth time and with the highest majority that I have ever received.

On a personal note, this was the most difficult election I have ever had. In the middle of the election I suddenly lost my brother in the U. K. The loss of my brother was a great shock to my family. He was very close to me and participated in all of my elections. It was with sadness that in the election, in which I received the highest majority, he was no longer with me. I am dearly going to miss him.

On another element of this election, it was quite interesting that in Calgary there was an intensive attack on me from the *Calgary Herald* editorial board. I must emphasize the editorial board because the *Calgary Herald* reporters were very nice in telling me that they supported me, but this editorial board has taken an anti-Deepak stand from day one. Whenever it can, it will take any opportunity to knock me for reasons only known to the board.

What is very interesting about the *Calgary Herald* editorial board is that it is the only media outlet in Calgary that is completely out of touch. The other media outlets had balanced reporting during the campaign, except for this editorial board.

I mentioned to the editorial board that it seemed quite strange to me that here we have a paper representing a multicultural city like Calgary, yet the *Calgary Herald* editorial board does not have a single visible minority on its board to give a different point of view. However, that is part and parcel of democracy in this country. I have moved forward because the people of Calgary East gave me a resounding mandate to come back. They not only gave me a mandate but a very strong mandate to this government as well.

Let there be absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind, despite what the opposition says, we received a very strong mandate from the people of Canada. They gave us a majority and told us that we had four and a half years to run this country. Our budget reflects that mandate. Let us get on with business, let us start running this country, and get things going.

On the doorsteps of Calgary East I heard people comment on election costs and that there was a waste of \$300 million. There was no need for the election because the priorities of Canadians were different. Their priority was not playing politics.

What are the priorities of Canadians?

The first priority for Canadians are jobs. A good-paying job would take care of families and give the necessary security. Canadians want to see this economy move forward and this government has the best record in this economy.

• (1215)

I do not have to say anything, the OECD and everybody knows that.

During the crisis that took place, Canada stood out as one of the few countries that had sound economic management. The credit goes to this government contrary to what the member from the Liberal Party said, that it was the former Prime Minister. We can forget that.

I know the policies of the former Liberal government. If it had such good policies, its members would not be sitting over there at the end by themselves.

It was this government that addressed the issue at the time when there was a serious global recession. This government provided the

necessary economic stimulus package for the economic conditions to ensure that Canadians had jobs.

Having said that, the second stage of that economic action plan means we now re-entrench to ensure that the gains we made remain. That is why in this budget we have said we will be balancing the budget.

The most important thing is that we will be balancing the budget. Of course, that may require a few painful here and there cuts, but not too much. Most importantly, one must remember that during the recession, when it could have been very painful, this government stood on a phenomenal record.

Second, I heard from seniors in Calgary East about jobs. Seniors have worked for this country and brought us to where we are. And seniors are feeling the pinch of the recession.

This government has worked very hard. This government has a seniors minister. This government has brought in policies to ensure that seniors are taken care of. The budget presented in March, which these parties defeated, had strong programs for seniors. Now the opposition is standing up and saying they support seniors.

Our government has programs for seniors and things are happening, so why do the opposition parties always vote against the budget?

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver South.

Our government is investing in communities. It is very critical and very important that our communities are safe.

This government has a record of bringing sound bills that will not only fight crime but will also invest in crime prevention.

Who defeated these measures? Those guys. It is nice to know that the separatist party is not here anymore. It is good to know that.

Let us go back. This government is going to bring all of these very important key things to Canadians, all part and parcel of our moving forward agenda. This agenda will see bills coming forward that address the needs of Canadians.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, it is very important that we listen to what our constituents are telling us. I have had the great honour and privilege of listening to what my constituents told me on the streets. I will bring those values and views here to the Parliament of Canada, the Government of Canada, and to my colleagues.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a look at a national challenge.

As the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, I come from a rural region that relies on funding from economic development agencies. The government has made major cuts in this area, complicating the lives of those living in Canada's rural regions who rely on these funds to diversify their economy.

Why is the government abandoning the regions in their budget, particularly given that their campaign slogan was about our region in power?

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Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the hon. member on being elected to the House for the first time.

When we make an economic statement and a plan, it encompasses the nation completely. We have made business cuts, tax cuts to assist families and to stimulate the economy. The whole stimulation that will take place in the Canadian economy is going to benefit his region as well.

As part and parcel of this budget, a balanced budget will put Canada's economy in a sound position which will benefit the member's region as well.

• (1220)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome back the member for Calgary East. I have enjoyed his friendship and collegiality over the years. I know he would be disappointed if I did not make note of the contradiction he made in his comments. He first said the cuts were going to be painful and then there were going to be cuts, at which point he caught himself and said a few cuts here and there.

If we look at the budget's impact on Atlantic Canada, it is like *Edward Scissorhands* went through line departments. We are seeing cuts to Marine Atlantic, HRDC, Fisheries and Oceans and ACOA.

Does my friend and colleague not see the disproportionate amount of burden that is being carried by the people of Atlantic Canada through the cuts in this budget?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his return to the House. He somehow survived the orange and blue waves, and I have to give him credit for that.

As I said, we did not do specific cuts to regions. We did not identify regions; we identified the country as a whole. The budget is giving a very strong statement about a very strong economy in Canada, and the member's region would also benefit extensively as a result of that.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on a very good presentation to the House.

In discussing the budget, an hon. member made reference to the firefighters tax credit. A point of order was made to attempt to straighten everyone out about the fact that Liberal members did not vote against the firefighters tax credit. I wonder if my hon. friend recalls our friend Rick Casson putting forward his private member's bill, Bill C-325.

Does the member recall that almost every Liberal, and I say "almost" because I have not counted them, voted against it. I wonder if the House would allow me to table the press release from the Hon. Rick Casson and, of course, the voting record of members, particularly of the Liberal Party. Would the member be willing to allow me to table that in the House, of course based on the Speaker's ruling?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member on his victory. I indeed want to thank him very much for having the historical record, saying it was my good friend Rick

Casson's private member's bill and it was the Liberals who did not vote for it.

With the Speaker's permission and if it is possible, we would like to table the press release and the names of Liberals who voted against the firefighters tax credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is there unanimous consent to table the said documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise in the House today. I thank my colleague the hon. member for Calgary East and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for sharing his time with me.

This is the first time that I rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Vancouver South, who honoured me with their confidence and support on May 2. Therefore, I ask my colleagues to allow me just a few moments to thank them for the opportunity to serve as their MP. I would like to acknowledge that some of these members are up in the balcony today.

Vancouver South is one of the most diverse ridings in Canada, with over 75% of residents having ethnic backgrounds from around the world. Canada's largest Sikh temple and Vancouver's largest Chinese church are in Vancouver South. Our diversity is the cornerstone of our community and we are a jewel in Canada's crown of multiculturalism.

Vancouver South is also home to many families who can trace their ancestry back generations. These are families who helped to found and expand critical industries, such as lumber, mining and fishing. These are the people who helped build railways to unite Canada and to open the west to trade and growth. From this vibrant past, our families and our community continue to contribute toward building Canada's economic railway, as we continue to lead in a region for expanded trade for Asia.

Our diversity, our work ethic, our shared Canadian values are our strength and together we form a world-class city, one which *National Geographic* has recently designated as one of the top 50 destinations in the world.

As the member of Parliament for Vancouver South, it is a great honour for me to stand in this place today to speak in support of the budget, a budget that will provide stability, a budget that will provide more support and tax relief for those who need it and a budget that will help to diversify our economy, expand our competitiveness, create jobs and build the Canada of tomorrow.

Our government has taken real action to make life more affordable for families in Vancouver South and across Canada. Previous budgets have reduced the tax burden on families and helped save the average Canadian family over \$3,500 every year. Tax freedom day now comes 20 days earlier.

Families in Vancouver South and across Canada welcome the measures our government has presented in budget 2011. They represent significant changes, which they endorsed on May 2.

Budget 2011 will build upon our achievements, with numerous new measures to support families. Our government has pledged to introduce a children's arts tax credit, a family caregiver tax credit and extend the eco-energy home retrofit program.

The new children's arts tax credit will give families real resources to expand opportunities for their children by supporting the cost of enrolling them in meaningful development programs. Parents will be allowed to claim up to \$500 incurred per child under the age of 16.

The family caregiver tax credit will help families care for dependent relatives. With 40% of Canada's population reaching the age of 65 in the next 15 years, this new \$2,000 credit will mean families will have the extra help they need to care for loved ones with dignity and respect.

We are extending the successful eco-energy retrofit program to help families lower their heating and electricity bills by making their homes more energy efficient. This is an important cost-saving measure for family budgets as well as an important tool to help protect our environment.

Families will also be supported by measures our government has introduced to help students. UBC president Stephen Toope has said that the measures in budget 2011 are in line with the growing consensus among Canadians that Canada's research universities play an integral role in advancing our economy and improving the social and economic well-being of all Canadians.

We are proud to be delivering for Canada's universities and colleges and especially to support Canada's students as they work toward a bright future.

For full-time students, like those at UBC, Simon Fraser University or Langara in Vancouver, the budget would allow them to earn more money without affecting their loans, doubling the in-study exemption of \$100 per week and giving them a tax break on certification fees.

•(1225)

As a student at UBC, I recall working three jobs to put myself through university and therefore I know first-hand what measures like these can mean to students.

For our seniors, we are taking important steps to lay a foundation to assist our aging population. Our Conservative government continues to recognize the important contributions Canada's seniors have made to the success of our country. Just as they have cared for us, this next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes important steps to care for and improve the quality of life for seniors in Canada.

Budget 2011 builds on our past support for seniors by proposing new measures that would enhance the guaranteed income supplement, expand the new horizons for seniors program and extend the target initiative for older workers. We are increasing the guaranteed income supplement to give low income seniors additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This change will help more than 680,000 seniors in Canada.

The new horizons for seniors program has helped thousands of seniors and seniors groups across Canada to become more active and engage in their communities, achieving a better quality of life.

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I have visited and have engaged with many of these vibrant seniors groups in Vancouver South and across Canada. I am delighted to anticipate that this program will be expanded by an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors, as well as to expand support for victims of elder abuse.

In the recent election campaign, my own mother was forced to publicly share her private experience with senior abuse. This is a private and often overlooked crime that will only increase in frequency as our population ages. It touches families everywhere and in a variety of ways, but this budget builds on past steps that we have taken to address this important issue for our seniors.

We also understand that while some seniors choose to retire, a number of them wish to stay in the workforce. For them, our government is extending the targeted initiative for older workers by investing an additional \$50 million to provide older workers with assistance in upgrading skills and helping to facilitate their return to work.

We are also eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees, giving seniors who want to remain active in the workforce the freedom to make their own choice.

These investments are in addition to the \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief which our government has provided to seniors and pensioners since 2006. Our government is here for seniors, just as they have been here for us.

On May 2, Canadians were clear. They gave our government a mandate to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a prudent plan, a practical plan and a plan that provides tax relief, making a real difference for the hard-working families of Vancouver South and across Canada.

As a new member of the House, it is a privilege for me to serve and to express my support for the budget on behalf of the people of Vancouver South.

Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth, with nearly 540,000 new net jobs created since July 2009. Our economic recovery is the envy of the world and there is still more to be done. From the most esteemed economist to the doors of Vancouver South, Canadians have acknowledged that this government's economic action plan is working. They have benefited from it, they have supported it and they voted for it.

As His Excellency said during the Speech from the Throne just one week ago, "Let us move forward and build the 21st century, limited only by our ambition and our imagination".

I encourage all members of the House to support budget 2011. Together, with Canada's economic action plan as our guide, we can meet the important challenges before us and continue to build a strong and stable road toward a stable future, full of opportunity.

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● (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Vancouver South mentioned pension indexing on several occasions, saying that we should support the budget based on this issue. I would like to describe a simple scenario. A lady that I know quite well skips a meal every once in a while to save money, like many seniors in Canada. The help given to her through the indexing proposed by the Conservatives would allow her to perhaps buy a coffee or an apple instead of completely skipping a meal. If someone were to visit this lady, they could tell her that this indexing will allow her to have a coffee instead of lunch. I would like the hon. member to tell me that is the right thing to do for her.

● (1235)

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, this government has, in addition to these measures presented in budget 2011, built on top of the \$2.3 billion that we have already provided in annual tax reliefs for our Canadians.

We have removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls. We have introduced pension income splitting. We have increased the age credit amount of \$2,000. We have doubled the pension income credit of \$2,000. In addition, we are increasing the guaranteed income supplement, as well as spending another \$10 million on the new horizons program.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver South has indicated that this budget will help diversify our economy.

In Prince Edward Island, in order for any economy to be diversified, we will need to attract industry. The only industries that we will be able to attract in the current environment are industries that are not heavily dependent on low-cost electricity. We have sub-sea cables in our province which are at capacity, are 40 years old and the government refuses to support them.

Does the concept of economic diversification include all the provinces?

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, both the independent International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecast that Canada is ahead of the pack for economic growth within the G7 countries. All provinces benefit.

In addition, I would like the member to acknowledge and to recognize that the province of Prince Edward Island has been expanding its immigration and working with the provincial nominees program, which has brought investment and students from abroad. In Canada this is a \$5 billion industry and P.E.I. has benefited vastly from that.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Vancouver South on her recent election and I thank the people of Kootenay—Columbia for bringing me to the House.

As the member is well aware, as she said in her speech, job creation is very important for our country. As my son and many

others will be exiting from their combat mission in Afghanistan, could the member further explain how the helmets to hardhats initiative will benefit those who leave the armed forces in the future? This should be a very important item for our government as we look forward to ending our combat mission in July 2011

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, the helmets to hardhats program is an innovative, creative program that will benefit many of our service people who have served abroad and who we would like to honour.

This program will give them a viable road into job training, as well as jobs, when they come back from serving abroad and contribute to Canada in a very fast and direct way.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville, and I welcome him to the House.

I will take this opportunity to thank the wonderful constituents of my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country for their support in re-electing me for the third time as their Kelowna—Lake Country voice in Ottawa. I also extend my sincere thanks to all the hard-working and dedicated volunteers from my riding, especially those in the association who are here on the Hill this week for our national party convention. I especially thank my campaign manager and EDA president, Shari Matviashen; my financial agent, Mark Thompson; and the rest of our team. I give special thanks to my incredible staff, Linda and Louise, in the riding, and, of course, they work with Steve and Lynne here in Ottawa. Without them I would not be able to do the job that I love to do. I thank them for doing such a great job to help our constituents.

Last but not least, behind every successful man is an astonished wife. I send special thanks to my best friend and dear wife, Cindy, and to our three lovely daughters for their unwavering support.

Today we talk about the budget 2011 that was tabled earlier this week, which is designed as a low tax plan aimed at creating jobs and growth in our economy. It contains targeted spending measures toward those who need it most, while maintaining the necessary fiscal restraint required during tough economic times. I believe it is a pragmatic, balanced approach and it is the right budget for the present time.

What does it do for me? That is often what I have heard from constituents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and I could tell my constituents the following: Budget 2011 helps low income seniors and caregivers looking after aging parents or disabled family members; it helps small business and local manufacturers create and maintain jobs; it helps homeowners and local contractors through the extension of the home energy retrofit program to reduce home heating costs; it helps Canadian armed forces veterans make the job transition to civil society; and it acknowledges the importance of volunteers in our community, especially our local volunteer firefighters, providing them with a much needed tax break on their expenses.

I personally thank our firefighters from Oyama, Ellison, Joe Rich, Lake Country and Kelowna for their dedication to keeping our communities safe.

Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting with the presidents of both Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan who appreciated the additional post-secondary funding in budget 2011. Our colleges, universities and students will receive more breaks on tuition costs and funding for innovative research and development efforts which will support our forestry, agriculture and tech sectors.

Local municipalities will also be able to count on more funds targeted for community infrastructure projects and, very important, a permanent gas tax fund that will make long-term infrastructure planning possible.

Moreover, budget 2011 will build on our efforts to protect the financial security of families and individuals, including personal income tax savings of over \$3,000 for the average family of four, a \$1,200 per year child care benefit and pension income splitting for seniors.

It also renews our commitment to eliminate the federal deficit, which reflects a common theme that I heard on the doorsteps: we have to live within our means. Budget 2011 reiterates our commitment to do so while protecting critical funding to the provinces for health care and social programs. It works for Canadians because the initiatives contained in it are a direct result of the prebudget consultations with ordinary Canadians who, like my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country, offered sensible, practical solutions for the economy.

By far, one of the biggest concerns for my constituents remains to be the economy and maintaining and creating jobs. We all know that small, medium and large businesses create jobs and that the government creates the economic environment that spurs Canadian companies to create jobs. Our government's incentives for businesses will create the kind of highly skilled labour we want and need in this country.

Many of my colleagues have risen in the House to talk about the numerous positive aspects of budget 2011. I will take some time to share with the House why our economic action plan is so vital to economic growth and illustrate an example of exactly where the growth will come from. I think members will see quite clearly how this government's economic objectives are crucial to attracting the kind of investment we need to help Canadian companies grow.

A local reporter, Steve McNaull of the *Kelowna Daily Courier*, just yesterday filed a report that shows how innovative the Okanagan Valley has become. Steve writes, "While California's Silicon Valley is legendary as the home of the biggest tech companies in the world, like Apple, Facebook, Google, Intel, Hewlett-Packard and Oracle, the Okanagan's Silicon Vineyard is a burgeoning cluster with firms such as Disney Online's Club Penguin, web interactive video company HuStream and software developers QHR and Windward.

• (1240)

"As such, the smaller Okanagan tech companies are a little intimidated by the California giants. But they should not be, because tech is tech, business is business and California companies can be a

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great source of investment, mentoring and partnership for Okanagan companies and vice versa".

Those are the great things happening in our country. For the past three years, a Metabridge conference has been held in Kelowna bringing together Okanagan and California tech types to network and pitch ideas. It is all about creating partnerships, opportunities and investment.

As former Facebook executive, Alison Rosenthal, pointed out:

There's a big talent crunch in the Silicon Valley and Western Canada can supply talent easily. We're in the same time zone and we're just a short flight away.

As Steve McNaull points out, Okanagan companies can look for investment and advice from California firms or angel investors like Ms. Rosenthal.

Companies are working hard in our valley with the support of initiatives, like the newly created Accelerate Okanagan, to help grow and attract investment. That is why our government's commitment to a low corporate tax, along with the willingness to invest in innovation, is so important. It is also why our expansion into new markets is critical, as I have heard over and over again while I had the opportunity to be a member of the international trade committee for the past five and a half years.

I would like to congratulate my hon. friend from Abbotsford on his appointment as the new Minister of International Trade. As he pointed out in the House earlier this week, international trade creates good paying jobs and spurs economic growth. That is why it is fundamentally a kitchen table issue.

Breaking down interprovincial trade barriers is equally important. That is why the Prime Minister is committed to reducing red tape and has taken a regulatory view to make it easier for Canadians to do business within our own country.

One sector that could benefit from this is the wine industry in the Okanagan and across Canada. We need to break down barriers, like the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act. It is very archaic. It dates back to 1928 and prevents Canadian wineries from selling their award-winning wines directly to Canadians who reside outside of their province. It is incredible that today we cannot enjoy the fruits of the land from one province to the other. I do not see why Canadians should not be able to enjoy this wine. It is made in Canada. It is a product that is award winning internationally. That is why I have once again tabled Motion No. 218 to allow the consumer to purchase wine directly from the vintner to help our small wineries grow. I would appreciate the support of all members of this House on that so that we can move forward in working with our provincial partners.

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These measures, supporting investment, opening new markets and breaking down barriers, send the message that Canada is open for business, that we have the talent, the skills and the companies needed for success. That is how we are strengthening the economy and helping to create the jobs we need.

There are so many other stories in the Okanagan that reflect this kind of momentum. There is literally no limit to the potential. I strongly believe that the positive energy coming out of the Okanagan is reflective of the positive business-friendly economic strategy put forward by our government.

Opposition members need to get on board. It is unfair to Canadians when they try to suggest that our support for the economic backbone of our country's business is done at the expense of family, seniors and communities. This is so untrue and our record proves it. Not only have we done a great deal for families, seniors and communities since 2006, we have done it without jeopardizing our support for health and social programs. In fact, one can look at this government's record and see that it has not turned its back on anyone.

I come from a riding with one of the highest populations of seniors in the country, which is why I am so supportive of initiatives like increasing the guaranteed income supplement, which builds on the \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief our government has provided to seniors and pensioners, including removing our 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls and introducing pension income splitting as a couple of examples. The fact is that we have focused on seniors and provided for them in every budget since 2006.

By electing me, my constituents have handed me the responsibility to ensure their tax dollars are spent wisely and effectively. They have also given me the opportunity to build on what has been accomplished together with our government and our riding working together at all levels of government. After all, there is only one taxpayer. We have had an expansion of Highways 97 and 33. Our help has assisted our fruit growers. We have built a passport office, invested in affordable housing, helped the homeless and youth at risk, local green initiatives, transit expansion, and arts and culture. There are numerous examples. We are keeping our communities safe with crime initiatives like the organized crime task force.

I thank my cabinet colleagues who have taken the time to listen and who have not only understood but acted and delivered for Kelowna—Lake Country. I want to especially acknowledge this government's commitment to partnerships because, as a former municipal councillor for nine years, I know how important it is that what we do at the federal level respects what is done at the provincial and municipal levels. I believe that is why during the recession this government's stimulus funding was so successful.

I do believe that for my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country and for all Canadians great things are yet to come.

• (1245)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for Kelowna—Lake Country back to the House and congratulate him on his re-election.

Earlier we heard speeches by the member for Calgary East and other people in the House who talked about how people voted

against the budget. For the record, the last time the budget did not come to a vote. The House fell before it. They can move away from that rhetoric.

I want to talk for a moment about the seniors that my colleague talked about in his riding. I am glad to hear that he is concerned about these particular individuals because many seniors in Canada are the poorest of the poor. They receive \$1,162 a month and the government will give them \$50 more. That is not even a half measure of what is needed. It should be targeted to 250,000 seniors and it should be closer to \$150 a month to do anything at all to raise them up.

I would ask the member to talk to the finance minister and carry the message that is necessary here on behalf of those seniors.

• (1250)

Mr. Ron Cannan: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague back and congratulate him on his re-election. I look forward to working together.

Seniors have worked hard to build the wonderful country that we have today. We often take for granted the freedom of democracy, the rule of law and what we enjoy. I read an email the other day from a 70-year-old person who was talking about work ethics and integrity and how people have a sense of entitlement.

Our government is providing the infrastructure, the groundwork, to allow individuals to build up. We are rewarding those individuals.

Our strong, stable, national Conservative government is investing in our Canada pension plan so that it is secure, and we will continue to build on that. As I mentioned, in 2006 we put billions of dollars into programs to help seniors, whether it was pension splitting or the 85,000 seniors that we have taken off the tax roll. We will give them another \$3,000 to add to their income before they are taxed. There is a lot of opportunities for seniors and a lot of wisdom gained from their volunteer sectors.

I thank the member for his concern for seniors. We will continue to work together to make a stronger and safer community for all.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my friend and colleague back to the chamber as well and offer my congratulations. I also offer my condolences as his Canucks lost last night to a strong and stable Boston Bruins offence.

I will give the government credit because there are a couple of roses in the budget but there are many thorns that we need to walk around.

The eco-energy program makes sense. We want to encourage some type of behaviour that will benefit the planet and help people to keep the costs of operating their homes down.

The Budget

I want to get the member's opinion on one of the tax cuts. A tax cut was given to those who register for sports, and I utilize that myself. My wife and I encourage our three sons to get involved in sports, not because we are looking for a tax cut but because we want them to get involved in sports. Does my colleague feel that there will be a big upswing in the number of young Canadians playing the piano or painting as a result of the children's arts tax credit?

Mr. Ron Cannan: Mr. Speaker, it is down to three games now. Some would say that the best offence is a good defence and the Bruins play a good defence. I will not take that away from them. We are looking forward to the next few days and we will cheer for Canada's team. Do not count the Canucks out yet.

I think the backbone of Canadians is that when things are tough we dig in. We have the strongest economy of the G8 nations and the best GDP to debt ratio. We continue to create more jobs than any other developing nation, but we are not out of the woods yet.

However, this is about helping Canadians of all ages. It is about fairness. Our campaign commitment was to help families. We encourage youth to participate in sports and keep active. The fastest growing problem in health care is youth obesity. We also want to create the other side of the element, that being arts and culture, music. It is important for a community to have a balanced approach. The Okanagan is one of the cultural capitals of Canada.

Our government will continue to invest to ensure that people of all ages in all spectres of our communities have the opportunity to expand their talents and gifts to become the greatest Canadians of all.

• (1255)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the federal budget that was tabled by the Minister of Finance in this place on Tuesday.

Before I get to my comments, congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, for your appointment as our very capable Acting Speaker, and I thank my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country for yielding some time to me this afternoon.

As this is my first major address to Parliament, I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the residents of Mississauga—Streetsville for their confidence in me and in our government.

I would also like to thank my wife, Rhonda and my children, Sarah and Megan for their unwavering support of me during the campaign and now as a husband and father away from the family while we are all here in Parliament.

None of us would be here without our fabulous campaign teams and volunteers. While it can be dangerous to single out any one person for their help, I do want to pay particular thanks to my campaign manager, Jodi MacDonald for her tremendous efforts in our successful campaign.

Finally, congratulations to all members who were either elected or re-elected, and also to the thousands of women and men who placed their names on ballots for the same opportunity we all have to serve our communities as members of Parliament. No matter what party,

riding or area of the country, everyone should be thanked for participating in our democratic process.

Now to the budget. I feel like I have this budget memorized. Like all hon. members, I spent 36 days knocking on thousands of doors talking about this budget because it was presented already on March 22, and of course not implemented because of an election that no one wanted. However, given the results, it was not such an unnecessary election after all.

I want to talk from my community service perspective about some of the very positive initiatives in this budget. When I listened to my neighbours at the doors about the March 22 budget, there was very strong support for these initiatives. I consistently heard from people that this was a good budget in tough times, that it was reasonable and it was affordable. My constituents were clear that they wanted us to focus on jobs and the economy and I am delighted to report to them that this is still our number one priority.

I have served two terms on the Mississauga Arts Council board of directors in recent years and I cannot tell the House how thrilled I am about the new children's arts tax credit. Mississauga is home to the Living Arts Centre, and many times I see young people actively participating in music, dance, art and other creative activities. In almost all cases their parents or caregivers have paid a fee to the city of Mississauga to enrol their child in that program, allowing the family to claim up to \$500 a year to offset that cost. It is not only a cost saving for the family, but I suspect it will also make it more affordable for more children to enrol in these programs.

I have just completed a three year term on the board of Safe City Mississauga and was appointed its founding chair. Safe City is Mississauga's crime prevention association and we work very hard on local crime prevention initiatives. We have also been in touch and met with the National Crime Prevention Centre and are very well aware of our government's strong commitment to fund prevention initiatives across the country.

I was very pleased to see the increased funding in the budget for youth crime prevention programs of \$20 million over the next two years. I suspect that organizations like Safe City Mississauga might come up with creative local initiatives to help prevent youth crime and gang recruitment through this new and very important funding.

• (1300)

This budget provides increased support to students in post-secondary education. We know that in order to succeed in the 21st century's knowledge-based economy we need highly skilled and educated people to be the workforce of the future.

The Budget

Our government is helping full-time students by doubling the in-study income exemption, helping close to 100,000 students. We are also helping part-time students through eligibility changes to allow more students to qualify for a Canada student loan.

Mississauga is getting its first full community college this fall as a direct result of the federal infrastructure grant to Sheridan College through Canada's economic action plan. This new institution is a much needed new educational facility in our fast growing city.

In the last campaign there was considerable talk about corporate tax rates. I want to let the House know that those low rates are important, not just to create jobs in cities like Mississauga but to keep jobs there too.

My riding consists of many small business operators but also some large companies that employ thousands of people in very good paying jobs. I want those jobs staying in my community. These employers tell me that Canada's tax rates are very important in their business decisions.

Further, as a long-time member of the Mississauga Board of Trade I can say that it is its position that raising corporate tax rates will have a significant impact on Mississauga's business community. It has submitted many briefs on that tax rate issue.

That is why I am delighted to see that we have a new tax credit for new hires for small business and that this budget commits to maintaining one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the world.

As well, when knocking on doors I did encounter a number of older workers who had lost long-time jobs as a result of the worldwide economic recession. The very interesting thing that I heard from these people was not that they were bitter or blaming anyone, it was that they still wanted to work and make a contribution. They understood the very difficult situation that many firms found themselves in and some of the very tough decisions that had to be made.

Although these residents no longer had work, they were willing to do their part to retrain and re-enter the workforce. I will be thrilled to report back to those people and others that we are extending the targeted initiative for older workers to support training and employment programs.

I have also had the opportunity to speak with and meet many seniors at their doors or through a number of very active seniors' clubs and associations in my riding. We know that many seniors need our help and support because of low incomes and their need for support services.

I am very pleased that this budget makes the largest increase in the guaranteed income supplement in decades of up to \$600 more a year for single seniors and \$840 a year for senior couples. Our government is helping to lift thousands of seniors out of poverty through this very significant increase to the GIS.

In my previous life I had a very significant interaction with municipal government. This very important order of government does deliver many services that directly affect the lives of all of our constituents. Generally, however, there has been a view that the federal government does not have a direct relationship with municipalities. There are some that take the view that municipalities

are still children of the province and that any federal funding should go through the provincial parent.

I am very pleased that not only have we, as a federal government, continued to live up to our commitment to flow the gas tax money directly to municipalities for transportation and infrastructure, but that this budget commits to make that transfer permanent. If it is one thing I hear from municipalities, it is that they want long-term, predictable funding.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan may be the most democratic budget ever presented in this House. That is because the members of the Conservative majority government campaigned on it in the last election. Canadians who elected us knew exactly what they were getting when they gave us their confidence.

They voted for strength and stability. They voted for a measured approach as we continue to emerge from the worldwide economic recession. They wanted us to keep taxes low, invest in priorities, and they wanted us to be responsible. This budget achieves all of those goals.

• (1305)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome and congratulate my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville. Mississauga—Streetsville is the land of wide open spaces, rocks, fish and trees, oh, sorry, that is my riding, Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

The hon. member talked about the GIS. If a senior qualifies, it would be about \$50 a month. Of course, in Ontario with the HST, which the Conservative government played a very big part in implementing, with the extra taxes now on gasoline, home heating and electricity, that \$50 is more than eaten up for seniors.

Everyone in this place agrees that seniors should be able to retire with dignity and respect. How is this budget going to do that?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to talk with seniors about the increase in the GIS while campaigning door to door. Many constituents said they thought it was a significant increase. At one of the lowest incomes in the country, seniors would not belittle \$50 a month. It makes a huge difference in a low-income senior's life and there would be slightly more for a senior couple.

There is no question that we are all under increased pressure for costs, many of which are out of this government's control. If provincial governments decide to raise taxes, there is not much we can do about that.

As a government, we have made major commitments to seniors in many different ways. We have given them many tools and opportunities to save and support them in retirement.

The Budget

I look forward to our government continuing to have this focus. We have a very strong Minister of State for Seniors. I am very much looking forward to working with her and talking about how we can continue to help seniors across the country.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my congratulations to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for his election.

I was surprised to hear members talking about being the most democratic government in history, or some such phrase, and that people know what they are getting, and they are getting just that. The current government has been the least transparent government in terms of how the budget would be balanced. I think people are getting a pig in a poke and will find out bit by bit what services they would be losing.

In this democratic government, were Atlantic Canadians who counted on the emergency centre that has been closed and moved to Halifax aware of that when they voted for the government?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we campaigned on and told Canadians was that after we wound down the federal infrastructure program we would start to look for ways to reduce the costs of government. We were very clear with Canadians. I certainly was when I knocked door to door and my constituents were clear with me. They wanted to make sure that they were getting value for money and that government was spending every dime wisely.

I sat in the House yesterday and listened to the answers from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans with respect to that one issue. He made it very clear that safety would not in any way be compromised by the centre being relocated. I believe it is being relocated to Halifax to serve along the Atlantic coast.

I take the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans at his word. He is doing his job, which is to review the expenditures of his department, as all ministers of the crown will be doing and that they were able to find some operating efficiencies in the department which will continue to allow us to have a low-tax environment and respect the safety, security, health and welfare of Canadians.

• (1310)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your election to the Chair. It is a big responsibility and a high honour.

I would like to make note that I will be sharing my time with the member for York South—Weston.

What an honour and a privilege it is for me to rise in the House, for the very first time, on behalf of the people of Scarborough—Rouge River. Above all today, I want to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for the confidence and trust that they have placed in me to represent and advocate on their behalf. I will fight for their priorities every day.

I also want to acknowledge the previous member for Scarborough—Rouge River, Mr. Derek Lee, for his 23 years of service to Scarborough—Rouge River. We do have different ideas about the country we want to build, but we share a love for community and a commitment to public service.

[Translation]

I would also like to congratulate all of my colleagues from Quebec and across Canada on their success in the election on May 2. I know that our team will do everything in its power to defend the public's interests in the face of this Conservative government's policies.

[Member spoke in Tamil.]

[English]

For the few who may not have understood Tamil, I will translate.

Next, I am proud to say that as the very first member of Parliament in Canada from Tamil heritage, I am proud and humbled to have been able to speak in this respectable House in my mother tongue.

Many of us Tamils came to Canada fleeing persecution and a civil war. Canada embraced us with open arms, and we have been doing our utmost to contribute to the economic development and cultural fabric of this great country.

I know that the diaspora Tamil community in Scarborough—Rouge River, the greater Toronto area and around the world, will be proud to know that we have achieved this very important milestone to hear Tamil being spoken in the Canadian House of Commons. This is the next step in the development of the Tamil community in Canada. The barriers faced by children of Tamils and other immigrants shall be broken down and they will endeavour to reach higher roles of leadership in Canada.

[Translation]

We will be discussing the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance last Monday. This budget does not meet the expectations of Canadians. It offers no solutions to the problems my constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River are facing. I know that the measures in this budget will not meet the needs of the people in my riding.

• (1315)

[English]

This budget fails to make life more affordable for the many families still struggling to recover from the effects of the recession. When speaking with my constituents during the election campaign, they clearly articulated the priorities for Scarborough—Rouge River.

They want more investment in local infrastructure, especially a more affordable and reliable local transit network that would cut the daily commute from over two hours each way.

The residents want the creation of more jobs locally in the community so that we all do not need to travel to downtown Toronto for work. We all know it is the small and medium-sized businesses that actually create local jobs and contribute to the community's economic development.

My neighbours want to see more investment in education, training and development of youth. Youth in high schools and their parents are concerned about the fact that post-secondary education is beyond their reach because of the skyrocketing tuition fees and the systemic barriers that visible minorities and people from lower-income households face with respect to the accessibility of post-secondary education.

The Budget

Some may say that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but I say that we, the youth, are the leaders of today.

Many young families are concerned about the fact that child care and elder care are neither accessible nor affordable.

Seniors are concerned that after paying into the system for much of their lives, they are now retiring into poverty.

The newer immigrants are concerned about access to settlement and integration services and the arduous process for having their foreign credentials recognized.

This budget does not address the reasonable and affordable proposals that the NDP made.

This budget does nothing to strengthen the CPP. It does nothing to provide relief for the family budget. It does nothing for the millions of Canadians without access to a family doctor. It fails to lift every senior out of poverty. It does nothing to reverse the \$50 million cuts to immigrant settlement service agencies. It does nothing to create good, reliable jobs in local communities. It really does not have a strong vision for investment in post-secondary education.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast voted for change in this election and over 4.5 million Canadians voted for New Democrats, to make this a truly historic election.

I would like to once again thank the constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River for contributing to this history by electing me. They chose many firsts this time: the first New Democrat to represent the constituency; the first woman to represent them; the first person of colour; the first youth to advocate for them; and, of course, the very first female Tamil member of Parliament in the world outside of India and Sri Lanka.

I thank the residents of Scarborough—Rouge River again for giving me this privilege to serve them and to be a member in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about health care. We recognize the importance of health care in Canada and the importance of a health care accord. This is something which we in the Liberal Party of Canada believe the government should be acting on today, that the negotiations and discussions among the different provinces should be happening today in order for us to achieve the ideal health care accord.

Could the member speak about how she feels with regard to the health care accord and the importance of it being discussed today as opposed to being put off, as the Conservative Party seems to be doing?

• (1320)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I remind the House and all Canadians that it is the NDP that fought for the health care system we have in Canada today and that so many of us take for granted. It is the NDP that truly understands the need for good quality health care and that health care should be fair and accessible to all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by welcoming the new

member for Scarborough—Rouge River and congratulating her on the eloquence and content of her speech.

However, I always wonder a little bit when we talk about health care in Ottawa since this is an area of provincial jurisdiction, and we know just how sacred this jurisdiction is to Quebec. There are 10,000 public servants in Ottawa but they do not manage a single hospital. As a result, it seems to me that, in her speech, the hon. member should have been careful to add that these demands should be met in a way that respects provincial jurisdictions, namely by making financial transfers or giving tax points to the provinces so that they can meet the objectives that she just mentioned.

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, health care is a provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government is responsible for the Canada Health Act and sets up the guidelines and tone as to the importance of health care. Also, the federal government directs the transfer payments to the provincial level for the administration of the health care, which is in the hands of the provinces to deliver.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on what I suppose is her maiden speech. It was very nice with lots of passion.

She talked very movingly about health care, so I want to ask her a question about it. In fact, it follows up on the last colleague's question on health care. We know it is a position, as we have heard enough times, of the government of the day to start to exchange cash for tax points in transfers. What is the member's position on replacing cash with tax points in transfers?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments about my maiden speech. Yes, it was my maiden speech and I am very excited and proud to have been able to give such a passionate deliverance as my inaugural speech in the House.

About the trade she is speaking of, as a new member I do not feel confident to speak on that matter right now and I will look into it. If the member would like to have a conversation in a couple of days, I will be able to give her a more thorough answer.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise for the first time in the House, I would like to thank my constituents, the voters of Calgary Centre-North, who not only brought me into the House but also delivered a strong, stable Conservative majority government to our country.

My colleague spoke to the issue of post-secondary education and investment in the post-secondary education sector. It is very important to note our government's commitment to ensuring transfer payments are sustainable over the next six years. We have laid out in our budget and it is a commitment we have made.

The Budget

I also note that in our budget we have several items which speak to post-secondary education, including enhancing and expanding eligibility for Canada's student loans and grants for part-time and full-time post-secondary students, investing \$9 million over two years to expand adult basic education and providing up to \$10 million a year in tax relief.

Will the member support this budget and these important measures?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaesan: Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education is something that is very near and dear to my heart, and I congratulate the member for her election to the House.

The budget does not really propose much for post-secondary education. Sure, there are some allowances for loans for students and it makes it easier for students to qualify for loans, but that is not real investment in post-secondary education.

The NDP has been proposing for many years to create a Canada post-secondary education act that would ensure the principles of accessibility and affordability of post-secondary educations would be enshrined in legislation.

• (1325)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating all members of the House for their election to this chamber and congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to your post.

I want to say how honoured and humbled I am to be the member of Parliament for York South—Weston. I must thank all of my campaign volunteers who helped me talk to thousands of residents in every corner of my riding.

I intend to be a strong advocate for all 114,000 residents of York South—Weston. It is where I live. It is my community. Let me tell hon. members a bit about it.

York South—Weston is a working class riding in the northwest of the city of Toronto, an area of declining manufacturing. York South—Weston is the second poorest riding in Ontario. Over a quarter, maybe 32,000 men, women and children in the riding, live below the poverty line. Nearly a third lack a basic high school diploma. Nearly half the population rent; they do not own their homes. Over 57,000 people are visible minorities. Many constituent are disabled and, as deputy critic for disabilities, I hope to make their lives easier and more affordable. One in seven residents is a senior. Many are living in poverty too.

I live in the riding and have raised a family there. Unfortunately, I have watched as the jobs have left, which has added more stress to the community. It was not always this way. York South—Weston is the former home of manufacturers such as CCM, Moffat Stove, Massey-Harris, MacMillan Bloedel, Dominion Bridge, Ferranti-Packard and Kodak, and the list goes on and on. They have all left. Tens of thousands of jobs are gone.

The people who worked here earned family-supporting wages, lived in modest, comfortable homes and shopped locally, building the local economy; but now with the jobs all gone, unemployment is the major concern in my community. The unemployment rate in York South—Weston is habitually 25% higher than the national

norm. Youth unemployment is even higher still, and the few jobs that remain tend to be low-wage, precarious service sector jobs.

When the Conservative government took office in April 2006, Toronto's unemployment rate was 6.4%. Now, after five years of whatever the government has provided, it is 8.4%, or almost 25% higher. The unemployment rate of York South—Weston is higher still. Thus, the economic action plan has clearly not worked. Actually, it is better called the economic fraction plan because it will only help a small fraction of Canadians.

Decent jobs with decent family-supporting wages and benefits and permanence are the top priority for me and my community, but even those who do find jobs must find them outside the riding and must use public transit, which, in my riding, is city buses, to get to work. Some have told me at the door that they spend as many as four hours every day commuting, which is time taken away from their families. That is why I am so disappointed by the government's budget. It does so little to meet the needs of these people.

The government's budget, the economic fraction plan, part two, does not improve the financial security of the residents of York South—Weston, as the finance minister claimed in his budget speech. Previous tax cuts for wealthy corporations have done nothing for my riding. The next wave of tax cuts for these big corporations will not help us here. Manufacturers have continued to close and no new jobs have been created.

The government's previous efforts in fighting the effects of the global recession had little impact in York South—Weston. Its vaunted infrastructure renewal did not touch York South—Weston at all, but passed by. Today, the budget leaves it even further behind.

However, if one travels north a couple of hours to the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, one will be able to smell the pork on the barbecues there, where the average income is \$75,000 a year and \$50 million was spent on border protection. I do not think it is anywhere near the border. Yes, I suspect that part of the economic fraction plan did what the government intended, but it did not help us in York South—Weston.

• (1330)

We in the NDP proposed and recommended to the government a job creation plan to would provide strategic investment in small business, not the giveaways to profitable corporations that this budget favours.

We in the NDP proposed a national infrastructure renewal strategy to draw investment and jobs into our communities. Instead, the government is closing down its infrastructure program.

The Budget

We in the NDP proposed investing in education and training for high-tech, clean energy and conservation jobs for the workforce that we need in the 21st century economy. This is a missed opportunity in this budget. Residents in my riding want to create a green centre of excellence on the 53 acre former Kodak site, for good jobs in the 21st century economy. However, without a federal job creation strategy, without federal investment and a clear environmental plan, we will probably get the planned shopping centre and parking lot, which we need like a hole in the head.

We in the NDP proposed a national public transit strategy that would maintain and expand public transit across the country with a clear mechanism for sustainable, predictable long-term funding. Such a strategy would create jobs, increase productivity, clean the air and give working people more time with their families.

Instead, we get an elite business class train to the airport with fares of \$50 being talked about. It seems the business elite do not want to have to rub shoulders with ordinary York South—Weston residents going to work.

This budget does little to help the average Canadian family deal with the cost of living. We in the NDP believe that Canadian families should get a break from the HST on home heating and hydro costs. However, the government's budget fails to do that.

I spoke to one senior during the campaign who had just received her heating bill for the month of March. It was \$600 for one month, and tears were flowing because she could not pay it. A lot of that bill was the HST, and some of her tears were tears of anger over the unnecessary tax grab.

I heard the finance minister say yesterday that the HST was the province's problem. So I suppose he would have no issue with foregoing the 5% federal portion of her bill.

We in the NDP believe that seniors should not have to live in poverty. We proposed pension reform and significant increases to the guaranteed income supplement, but the government's budget measures fail to achieve these goals.

Seniors in York South—Weston are suffering the double whammy of pensions that do not rise and skyrocketing fuel and food costs. The rise in their pensions was \$3 last year. How do they pay a \$600 heating bill when their pensions go up by \$3, or even \$53 with the \$50 the government is proposing that they get?

We in the NDP want to meet the needs of Canadian families by providing funding for more family doctors and nurses, by proposing measures to make prescription drugs and home care more affordable. The government budget does not meet these goals.

Many residents of York South—Weston do not have family doctors and use the over-crowded emergency room instead, and there is only one, as the previous provincial Conservative government closed the other hospital as its legacy to York South—Weston.

The token gestures to families with kids in arts or sports programs do not help the parents who cannot afford to enrol them in the first place, and the thousands who cannot find affordable daycare have no help whatsoever in the government's budget.

We in the NDP want to work with the provinces and territories to establish and fund a Canada-wide child care program and an early learning program that would create new child care spaces, improve community infrastructure to support the growth in child care and promote a one-stop shop approach for family services.

When their kids get out of daycare and want to go to university or college, the burdens of skyrocketing tuition and crushing debt loads are making that impossible. We in the NDP proposed a special education transfer to help ease the burden, particularly on low income families, but the government's budget is silent on that.

While there are many things we in the NDP would do differently in the budget, I see the government has taken our family caregiver tax benefit proposal. This will help families caring for people with disabilities, a subject that I have a personal interest in. However, we must do more. We should be implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, accompanied by strategies for providing disabilities supports, poverty alleviation, labour market participation and access and inclusion. I hope all members of this House will support this initiative.

We in the NDP are asking the government to rethink its priorities in the budget. As York South—Weston residents will clearly attest, the budget is of little or no help on the real issues facing tens of thousands who live in poverty in Canada's richest city. The budget will not create jobs here, will not provide more daycare, will not lift our seniors out of poverty, will not make higher education affordable and will not make ordinary living more affordable.

● (1335)

The government makes quite gleeful pronouncements about its majority. Whatever the government, it should be concerned about all Canadians, not merely the wealthy in Parry Sound—Muskoka, but even the folks in York South—Weston.

Its economic fraction plan aims at only a fraction of Canadians, and certainly not those living in poverty.

I urge the government to rethink its priorities and establish priorities that can assist all Canadians, not merely a small fraction of the population.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have known my friend from York South—Weston for about 25 years, although he may not want to admit it is that many.

One of the phrases that I do not like to hear but that is used quite often in this place is, "They just don't get it". Sometimes that is about the only phrase that applies.

I know we have some good people across the way. However, it baffles me that when the banks made \$22 billion last year and gave \$11 million in bonuses to their executives, seniors in this country are eating cat food. How do they square that circle?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, yes, I have known the member way too long.

It is clear that the government's priorities of favouring banks and large corporations over seniors, who feel they should be respected and treated with dignity, do not square in this budget.

Clearly, the idea of seniors continuing to live in poverty because of lack of government support is not one favoured by this side of the House, the NDP in particular. We should do everything in our power to insist that in this budget, at least seniors come out of poverty.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to welcome my new colleague to this House.

As I listened to his maiden speech, I did take a special interest in his comments regarding seniors, because although I have only been here for two and a half years, time and time again I have heard the NDP talk about wanting to support seniors and raise them out of poverty. Yet every time we put forward a measure to help seniors, the NDP votes against it. Here I would mention measures like pension income splitting, which actually helped us remove over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls; and measures like increasing the age credit amount by \$2,000 and doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000.

I would ask the member why on earth he is standing up now and claiming to be fighting for seniors, but with a party that continually votes against helping our seniors?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, clearly the member does not get what we are about.

The NDP is suggesting very strongly to the government that the quarter measures it is proposing or the half measures it is proposing in its economic fraction plan are not enough to raise seniors out of poverty. That is the issue before us today.

The issue before us today is not whether banks or corporations should have a lot more money, but whether or not seniors who have contributed all their lives and are now trying to retire with dignity should have an income that is large enough to allow them to live in dignity. That is what we are talking about. The government's proposal is only a fraction of that amount.

● (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, the administration of health care is done by the provinces. In my history with the province of Manitoba, there have been many issues, such as hallway medicine and issues with emergency care, including lineups and wait times, regarding the public not receiving the types of services they want to see.

What role does he believe the federal government has to play with regard to that whole administrative aspect the provinces are responsible for?

The Budget

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the NDP believes that one of the problems facing many Canadians now in the health care system is the lack of access to family doctors, which is crucial. That is facing many Canadians, and many in my riding of York South—Weston do not only not have access to family doctors but have access to only one emergency facility, which will be closing in the near future.

It is that which the NDP has tried to focus on with its proposals: to make sure that the government creates a mechanism whereby family doctors become available to each and every Canadian across this country.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my good friend and colleague from Wild Rose. Let me congratulate you on your appointment to the chair. I know you will do a great job in the House and with civility breaking out all over, it will be an easy job.

I would also like to thank the great people of Oxford for instilling their trust in me again to represent their interests in Ottawa, as well as my wonderful team of volunteers who were indispensable in making my re-election a reality. I would be remiss if I did not thank the great staff who represent me in my riding of Oxford and do a tremendous job. They make me look good and I appreciate that.

I am eager to move from the March 22 presentation of the budget to where we are now. It was derailed with an unnecessary election, and Canadians and the people of Oxford spoke on May 2. They gave us a clear mandate to move forward with budget 2011 when they made their wishes clear at the ballot boxes across this great nation, giving Canadians a long overdue strong Conservative majority in the House of Commons.

We on this side of the House will honour their directive by keeping our promises and commitments to secure economic recovery for all Canadians today and for generations to come. On this side of the House we plan to continue to do this by supporting job creation, strengthening our families and communities, investing in the economy of tomorrow by providing increased support for research and technology, and by working diligently to preserve Canada's fiscal advantage to keep it on the right track to balanced budgets by eliminating ineffective spending, limiting spending growth and closing unfair tax loopholes.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan would keep taxes low to promote jobs and economic growth while supporting Ontario families and seniors.

Let us talk about the unnecessary election triggered by the opposition that kept much-needed cheques out of the pockets of struggling Canadian seniors. We believe this to be an injustice to Canada's backbone and we will do everything within the parliamentary limits to ensure that Canada's seniors are treated with the respect they deserve.

The Budget

Our first step is to ensure support for seniors in the next phase of the economic action plan. The plan builds on the support in place for seniors by announcing new measures to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities for older Canadians, including those living in my riding of Oxford.

A new guaranteed income supplement top up benefit targeted to the most vulnerable seniors effective July 1, 2011 will be available to seniors with little or no income other than old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. These seniors will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. Single recipients with an annual income other than OAS and GIS of \$2,000 or less and couples with an annual income of \$4,000 or less will receive the full amount of the benefit.

There would be a provision of \$10 million over two years to increase support for the new horizons for seniors program, which provides funding to organizations that help ensure that seniors, including those in my riding, can benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their communities through active living and participation in social activities.

The residents of Oxford are not strangers to the new horizons for seniors program. Most recently, the South Gate Centre in Woodstock, the Town of Tillsonburg Non-Profit Housing Corporation and the Victorian Order of Nurses-Oxford Branch received funding under this program to improve the quality of life for seniors across Oxford.

However, we did not stop there. We also introduced \$50 million over two years to extend the targeted initiative for older workers program until 2013-14. This is a federal-provincial-territorial employment program that provides a range of employment activities for unemployed older workers in vulnerable communities with populations of less than 250,000 to help them stay in the workforce. That is up to \$840 million in new financial support for needy Canadian seniors. That is a budget I can throw my support behind.

Many families in Oxford will also be able to benefit from several important initiatives in this budget. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available for people to make improvements to their homes and make them more energy efficient. This would save them energy costs over the long-term as well as benefit the environment.

● (1345)

Two important tax credits would allow families to receive a tax receipt for expenses related to providing care for family members as well as extracurricular activities for their children.

The family caregiver tax credit would provide \$2,000 for caregivers of loved ones with infirmities, including for the first time spouses, common-law partners and minor children.

The new children's arts tax credit would enable hard-working families to claim up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

The rural areas in my riding rely on the excellent service of our volunteer firefighters. I am so pleased that the constituents in my riding who are volunteer firefighters will now be eligible to receive a \$3,000 non-refundable tax credit. I have heard from many constituents expressing their support for this tax credit.

Seniors are the backbone of our great nation and students are our bright future. We want all students to succeed in the global economy with the help of the best education possible.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes several measures to help students acquire the education and training they need to prosper, such as student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas. Practising family physicians will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

We will also be extending tax relief for skills certification exams, making all occupational trade and professional exam fees eligible for tax relief through the tuition tax credit.

In addition to these wonderful initiatives to further aid Canadian students, we are doubling the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week. This initiative will benefit over 100,000 students by allowing them to work more without negatively affecting their loans.

We understand that family support and involvement is key to any undertaking, whether it be professional or personal. That is why we are increasing the family income threshold for part-time Canada student loan and Canada student grant recipients, bringing the eligibility thresholds in line with the thresholds used for full-time students.

The residents of Oxford and all Canadians can look forward to \$15 million in ongoing funding to the Canada periodical fund, which supports the distribution of publications in Ontario and across the country. I know that many newspapers serving Oxford and the rest of rural Canada will applaud this initiative as they have been recipients of the funding in the past.

Municipalities across Canada can rest assured that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes legislation to make the gas tax funding for municipalities permanent. Canada's government will be putting into law the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns to support infrastructure projects. Over four years the municipalities of Oxford will receive a staggering total of \$25,216,242.

I like many Canadians understand that farmers feed cities and that is why the initiative for the control of diseases in the hog industry will be extended by an additional two years. The government will be providing \$24 million over two years to enable the Canadian Swine Health Board to complete initiatives directed at national biosecurity standards and best management practices that will benefit hog producers across the country.

The Budget

There is so much more that I could say about the whole budget. I just wish that the budget had stood on March 22 to reach the stage that it is at today before the House, so that Canadians would have had the benefit of all of the good things in this 2011 budget.

• (1350)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with the fact that the Conservatives intervening on the budget seem to have missed the essential points; that is, inequality in this country is now at its worst level since the 1920s. That inequality lever has to be rolled back to before the Great Depression. Tory times being tough times, the Conservatives have succeeded in their time machine in bringing us back to before the Great Depression, before we actually had the system of social programs in place.

We have also seen over the last few years the catastrophic collapse of our manufacturing sector. One quarter of a million jobs in the manufacturing sector, good family-sustaining jobs, have been lost on the Conservatives' watch.

I myself come from British Columbia. We have seen what the softwood lumber sell-out that the Conservatives brought in has done to softwood lumber communities across the west. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost.

My simple question to the member is this. Why do the Conservatives not acknowledge their mistakes, fess up, and work with the NDP to get a better budget?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I took it more as a comment than a question, but I would respond to my colleague across the floor that there have been 540,000 new jobs created in Canada. I do not know where that member has been and I understand that parts of this country are still lagging behind as a result of the great global recession, but that recession was not built in Canada. It came from across the world and most nations are suffering far more than we are. We are as strong as we are because of the policies of this government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member talks about job creation, there is a big difference between the Conservatives and the Liberal Party of Canada. The Conservatives have prioritized corporate tax breaks. They are looking at the richest corporations in the country to generate job growth, whereas the Liberal Party of Canada sees and values and recognizes the potential of small businesses, and how they can put more jobs into the economy. The government has made a decision, by prioritizing that particular tax cut, to take away other opportunities to spend or use those tax breaks in different ways.

Would the member not recognize that if we want to generate and create jobs in Canada from coast to coast, the best way to do that is to invest in small businesses as opposed to giving large generous corporate tax breaks to the largest and richest corporations in the country?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, within the budget there are provisions to encourage employment growth in small businesses. However, I would suggest to my friend that he might go into many of those places that he calls small businesses. They are also corporations. Many family farms across this country are now corporations. I know a number of those people are very pleased to

see the corporate tax rates go down, so they can then purchase equipment and purchase all kinds of things from the local economy. Corporations are not just what he might perceive as some huge international thing. Many small businesses in this country are incorporated and they enjoy this type of budget.

• (1355)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the other question I wanted to ask the member is, what would he say to seniors living in British Columbia?

What the Conservatives did was impose the HST, which is a massive tax shift. That is what they love to do. They love shifting taxes from the wealthy, very profitable Canadian corporations, to ordinary people. Seniors are paying \$2 a day more because of the HST in British Columbia and this budget actually gives them back \$1.15. So they took \$2 away and they give \$1.15 back.

Why do the Conservatives not just admit that they made a mistake with this budget and work with the NDP, so we can have real progress for seniors in this country and lift every senior in the country above the poverty line?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, the problem with my friend is that he has such a short memory. A little while ago, we reduced the GST on everything, from 7% to 6% to 5%, and my friend voted against that. That was on everything.

I do not know where he has this problem of thinking that we increase things. His party opposed to it and when the GST in Canada was reduced, the province of Nova Scotia, with an NDP government, raised it another 2%.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak today on the next phase of our Conservative government's economic action plan. Our government's action plan is the right plan for challenging times and it is critical to securing the economic recovery that had started through our previous budgets.

Before I speak to the budget, I would like to first take this opportunity to thank the voters of Wild Rose who re-elected me to this place in the May general election. As all of us who serve in this place know, it is a tremendous honour and a great responsibility to represent Canadians in their federal parliaments. I am humbled by the trust that my constituents have placed in me by returning me as a member of a Conservative team that is dedicated to balancing the books, cutting costs and waste and working for the well-being of all Canadians.

The people of Wild Rose have my pledge that I will continue to work hard for them at all times and always in the best interest of our great nation of Canada to ensure the confidence they have shown in me has not been misplaced.

Our government's good work on behalf of all Canadians is evident today as we continue debate on budget 2011. A global economic crisis that started outside our borders three years ago nevertheless impacted our country and brought with it significant challenges for Canadians. Our government met those challenges head on.

Statements by Members

The economic action plan was designed to lead Canada out of the worst recession in generations. The temporary stimulus measures of the economic action plan had their intended effect. The projects created jobs in a time of recession, while making investments in local infrastructure that would benefit our communities for years to come.

In my riding these investments were needed since years of rapid growth in Alberta had left municipalities in a crunch to keep pace with infrastructure requirements. In Wild Rose the action plan has created jobs, while benefiting the town of Canmore with a new pedestrian underpass. Banff has opened a very popular Legacy Trail. The town of Olds has renovated its sportsplex. Airdrie and Cochrane are completing major upgrades to arterial streets. These are among many other examples.

The action plan did the job it was designed to do. As a result, Canada has weathered the global recession in a stronger position than nearly all major economies.

Our economy has grown for seven straight quarters, with 540,000 new jobs created since July, 2009—

The Speaker: I will stop the member there as it is time for statements by members. The member will have seven and a half minutes left to conclude his remarks after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

VICTORIAVILLE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my home town, Victoriaville, is currently celebrating 150 years of history. The first person to build in Victoriaville was Louis Foisy, who, in 1861, asked to have the town of Victoriaville incorporated. He was a merchant, innkeeper, postmaster, church warden and, naturally, the first mayor of Victoriaville.

Victoriaville was once the furniture capital of Canada and, over the years, other industries have flourished there, including textiles and agriculture. The famous hockey sticks were also made there. Economic diversification helped many SMEs get a start there, and Victoriaville was known as the cradle of sustainable development thanks to the visionary Normand Maurice, the father of recycling in Quebec.

I commend the builders of Victoriaville—as well as those of Saint-Valère and Chesterville, which are also celebrating their 150th anniversary this year—for having left us an economic, cultural and community legacy that is so dynamic, vibrant and modern.

I would also like to invite my colleagues to come and visit us this summer to see the Laurier Museum, attend the cheese festival or simply partake in one of the many activities associated with the 150th anniversary of these municipalities.

• (1400)

[English]

BULLYING

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the riding of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley is proud of our children, as is every riding across the country, but in recent months our children have faced a new and dangerous threat, a threat that is taking the lives of our children.

In Nova Scotia over the past several months four children have lost their lives due to cyberbullying and Internet intimidation, two of them, sadly, in my riding. As adults and leaders of our country, it is our responsibility to keep our children safe.

For parents out there, please supervise what children are sending to others on the Internet and supervise what they are receiving on the Internet.

For the children of our country who are feeling alone, bullied and intimidated, do not stay silent. Children are not alone and should tell a parent or a teacher. They are there to help.

I look forward to working with all colleagues in the House from this and the other side of the aisle as we deal with this new and dangerous threat.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his recent budget, the Minister of Finance is helping only a third of seniors living below the poverty line. The government is making a minimal effort. Unfortunately, it is much too little. The NDP called on the government to help all seniors living below the poverty line. To do so, the budget should have allocated \$700 million, not \$300 million.

It is unacceptable in a society like ours to abandon those who build our country's economy. It is unacceptable that in 2011 we are unable to find the necessary resources to lift all seniors out of poverty.

On behalf of all seniors in need and especially those in the riding of Drummond, today I invite the Minister of Finance to immediately increase the guaranteed income supplement by \$700 million in order to allow all seniors to live in dignity.

* * *

[English]

PICKERING—SCARBOROUGH EAST

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank the people of Pickering—Scarborough East for the trust they have bestowed upon me and my volunteers for making it happen.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank the francophone voters in my riding for their support.

[English]

After 18 years, the constituents of Pickering—Scarborough East have chosen a representative from a party which advocates for a real change in the community. Energized by the wisdom, determination and true leadership of our Prime Minister, the people of Pickering—Scarborough East have chosen the path toward maintaining a strong economy, creation of jobs and low taxes.

Being part of the community where the beautiful Rouge River binds together two cities, Toronto and Pickering, I am very proud about the preservation of our green spaces for future generations, the Rouge park, which will be the first urban national park. It will be a great benefit to many people in the GTA.

I also thank Canada, the greatest democracy in the world, for allowing me, a humble emigrant from Romania, to become an accomplished engineer and to serve my country as a military engineer in the Canadian Forces, including the mission in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, it is a good feeling to be able to give back to society. I am here to serve.

* * *

AUDREY-ANN MURPHY

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we mourn the passing of our friend Audrey-Ann Murphy, who had worked with me for 14 years both in election campaigns and in my office.

Audrey-Ann took pride in helping people, never wanting any attention for herself. She was modest, hard-working and viewed her work with a sense of honour.

A note from constituents yesterday said, “We left your office feeling that Audrey-Ann was a person who could take on any task and get the job done”. They were right.

She could be loud and boisterous and was certain to tell people what they perhaps did not want to hear, but sometimes needed to hear.

I want to thank Audrey-Ann for being a friend to me and for working so hard for our constituents. I will miss her booming voice, her candour and her counsel. To her husband Graham, daughter Jessica, parents Alvin and Violet, sister Frances and Auntie, and her extended family, I share their loss and will miss her terribly. We loved her dearly.

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WINNIPEG SOUTH CENTRE

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise for the very first time in the House of Commons as the very humble servant for Winnipeg South Centre.

I give special thanks to my campaign team, my incredible family and the wonderful voters of Winnipeg South Centre.

I was so privileged to be visited by students from Churchill High School on the first day of this session and I want to thank each of them: Connor Boyd, Eason Cerasani, Randy Clark, Jase Falk,

Statements by Members

Brittany Fulford, Tiffany Jackson, Caelin King, Stuart Maddocks, Christopher Mantyka, Giorgia Skorletos, Calder Thorsteinsson, Chantalle Young and their three wonderful teachers, Susan Chodirker, Ross Penner and Dominic Zagari.

It is a privilege to share this House with the leaders of tomorrow.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this first opportunity I have to thank the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île for choosing me to represent them in the House of Commons.

I am also rising today to voice my concern about Canada's future, particularly in terms of the environment. This government continues to cut millions of dollars from the fight against climate change and is still refusing to meet its international obligations. Canada's per capita level of greenhouse gas emissions is among the highest in the world.

Even the largest energy company in Canada, Suncor, has described the government's approach as ineffective and has said that this approach will result in increased costs for consumers in the long term. On Monday, this same company called on the government to adopt stricter measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This government's attitude continues to marginalize Canada within the international community because of its poor environmental policies. The government must therefore recognize the urgent need to invest in the fight against climate change rather than granting tax breaks to companies that pollute our environment.

* * *

[English]

FLOOD PREVENTION

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know all parliamentarians join me in expressing our sympathy to the flood victims who are dealing with the devastating flooding that has gripped Canadians.

We want to express our thanks to all municipal leaders, firefighters, emergency measures staff, the countless volunteers and military personnel for their tireless efforts this spring.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for his commitments to this year's flood fight.

Flooding has been a challenge for Manitobans, including those in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake. Flooding is impacting the north Red River, Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, the Shoal lakes and Lake Winnipeg.

Constituents in my riding have legitimate questions about the management of flood control infrastructure in Manitoba, such as the Jenpeg, Fairford and Shellmouth dams and the Portage Diversion, which are operated by the province of Manitoba. These structures have created intentional flooding.

Statements by Members

While we cannot prevent natural disasters, the Manitoba government needs to look at long-term flood prevention strategies which help communities north of Winnipeg. The province of Manitoba needs to be grateful for the sacrifices made by flood victims, gracious in how it treats them and generous in how they are compensated.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this, my first occasion to rise in the House in this session, I want to thank the constituents of the great Kenora riding for re-electing me. I will continue to be a strong voice for Kenora in this government.

Three years ago, on Wednesday, June 11, the Prime Minister stood in the House and asked for forgiveness from aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential school system. This apology was an historic event and was a significant step toward reconciliation with aboriginal peoples.

We will continue to work closely with former students, their families and their communities to build a new relationship based on the knowledge of our shared past and renewed respect for each other.

This anniversary is an opportunity for all Canadians to remember and reflect on the lessons taken from the Indian residential school experience.

We must all renew our commitment to work together to build a better future and to make a meaningful and sustainable improvement in the lives of aboriginal people throughout Canada.

* * *

BEACHES—EAST YORK

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this chamber today to speak for the first time as the member for Beaches—East York. I am incredibly proud to do so and I am incredibly grateful to the people of Beaches—East York for the privilege to serve as their representative in the House.

On May 2, the people of Beaches—East York said to me, “Go forth to represent the values and priorities of this community in the House of Commons. Do your utmost to build a generous and compassionate country—a country worthy of those who have gone before us and of those that we have brought into this world”.

I look forward to that challenge and to working along side all those in the House who share in it.

There are many to whom I owe thanks, but most certainly we only get to this place with the support of those who love us. Therefore, I reserve my deepest thanks for my parents and my kids, Emily, Hannah and Rory, and my wife Donna who does the heavy lifting back home so that I might be free to do my best for Beaches—East York in this House.

• (1410)

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of his 90th birthday tomorrow.

The Duke of Edinburgh supports Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in her work and duties, but also serves as the president or patron of more than 40 Canadian organizations. I wish to highlight the Duke of Edinburgh's honorary military positions within the Canadian Forces.

He is Colonel-in-Chief of the following: the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa; the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada; the Royal Canadian Army Cadets; The Royal Canadian Regiment; the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment); and, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada.

During more than 20 royal tours, the Duke of Edinburgh has actively promoted the Canadian armed forces and His Royal Highness has travelled throughout Canada meeting people from all cultures and regions.

On behalf of all Canadians, I wish the Duke of Edinburgh a happy birthday.

* * *

[Translation]

CLAUDE LÉVEILLÉE

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that we learned today of the death of one of the greatest singer-songwriter-composers of his generation, Claude Léveillé.

A pioneering crafter of Quebec song, this great artist has left behind lyrics and melodies that will forever resonate in the collective memory of Quebecers. We will remember this intense songwriter, with his deep voice, seated at his piano, singing to us about his loves, his *Frédéric*, his nostalgic piano tunes, his inner self, his freedom.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Léveillé, and I pay tribute to this legend who made such a huge contribution to enriching Quebec culture.

And the member sang a Claude Léveillé song:

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: “Je me fous du monde entier...”

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[English]

DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL CROSSING

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, re-tabled by our finance minister this week, our government committed to take continued steps with the state of Michigan, the U.S. and Ontario governments to advance the construction of the new DRIC bridge at the Windsor-Detroit gateway and trade corridor.

Oral Questions

We are pleased to see the governor of the state of Michigan has given his support to the plan and is currently moving forward with legislation.

While our Conservative government has demonstrated a strong, ongoing and active commitment to this infrastructure priority, including in our budgets, opposition members have not. Canadians expect and want action not talk.

I call upon all members of this House, especially New Democrats, to support and vote for our plan. We encourage our counterparts in Canada to help us move this project along quickly for the shared economic, trade and security benefits of our two nations.

* * *

[Translation]

TOURISM WEEK

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this being Tourism Week, I would like to take a moment to recognize the important contribution made by Canada's tourism sector.

From coast to coast to coast, tourism is a \$64 billion enterprise. This important industry contributes to the growth of new businesses of all sizes and employs over 650,000 Canadians.

My riding of Ottawa—Vanier—and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for placing their trust in me for the seventh consecutive time—has over 700 businesses related to tourism, with more than 6,000 employees.

Canada is blessed in its natural beauty and its cultural diversity.

I wish to thank all employees in the tourism sector. Their warm hospitality will be felt again this summer when it comes time to welcome the millions of visitors from our own country and around the world to Ottawa and the rest of Canada.

* * *

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after serving a decade in the role, Sheila Fraser has retired from her position. On behalf of all Canadians, I thank Ms. Fraser for her dedication as Auditor General of Canada.

Whether it was conditions on reserves or the sponsorship scandal, nothing slipped the unfailing eye of Ms. Fraser.

As the Prime Minister said:

She has made an outstanding contribution in support of Parliamentary decision-making, increased accountability and transparency, and strengthened management of the public service. Ms. Fraser's service to Canada and Canadians exemplifies the very best of public service.

I fully agree with that.

I would invite all members to join me and thank her for her commitment, dedication and great service to this country.

•(1415)

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honour the lives of two Sudbury miners who were killed last night as a result of a tragic workplace accident at the Stobie Mine in my riding of Sudbury.

Both men were dedicated family men whose lives were taken from us far too soon. My thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends, co-workers and other members of my community as they try to cope with this shocking and devastating loss.

This is also a heartbreaking reminder of the danger miners put themselves in every day. We can only hope that the investigation into this accident leads to a safer workplace for workers, especially in the mining industry.

I believe I speak for all members of Parliament and extend our condolences to those mourning this very tragic loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

* * *

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Mr. Kyle Seebach (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the voters of Brampton West who elected a Conservative federal member for the first time since 1988.

There are few actions more despicable than committing a sexual offence against a child. I have just learned that an individual convicted of unspeakable crimes against children has been sent to a halfway house next to a school. This is unbelievable but, sadly, not uncommon.

Our government took action to protect children from sex offenders by strengthening the National Sex Offender Registry. However, more must be done.

Our government will ensure that those who commit crimes against children are punished by imposing strict mandatory minimum sentences. Anyone who commits a sexual offence against a child will never get a criminal record suspension.

These measures could already be in place but they were opposed and delayed by the NDP. As the father of two young children, I call on the opposition to support our legislation to protect children from sexual abuse when it is introduced.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General explained at length how lucrative it is to be friends with a Conservative minister. For example, the former industry minister sat down with two friends to share tens of millions of dollars. There were no witnesses, no documentation, no records. The auditor himself said that he has never seen anything like it and that he is scandalized. Is this sponsorship scandal 2.0?

Oral Questions

How is it that, with such a poor track record, this same minister is now responsible for budget cuts?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, these municipal projects were actually approved by the federal government and the municipalities. All of these projects were announced publicly and appear on the website. However, the Auditor General made several recommendations to improve the process in the future and we accept all of those recommendations.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, considerable sums of money were divided and allocated by the three wise men of Deerhurst.

There has been no accountability, no transparency and no rationale for decisions, which for the most part were completely unrelated to the stated objective.

This is truly the Liberal way of Chuck Guité and Alfonso Gagliano.

How could the Prime Minister give carte blanche to the minister? How could the minister choose 32 projects by himself without providing the slightest rationale? And how is it that he is still here?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP member's statements are entirely false. The reality is that these 32 projects were published. They are on the website. Every dollar was accounted for by this government. As I said before, the Auditor General made several recommendations to improve the process in the future and we accept those recommendations.

• (1420)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was the Auditor General himself who explained that the Conservative government kept Parliament completely in the dark and that the Conservatives misled Parliament not once but twice. The government approved millions of dollars in funding for border infrastructure but this funding was diverted to boondoggle projects hundreds of kilometres from the nearest border.

We want a clear answer to just one example. What does the restoration of a steamboat in the minister's riding have to do with the G8 summit or border infrastructure?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that program was announced publicly. The projects were published. In fact, we held debates on this issue several times here in the House of Commons. That being said, the Auditor General recommended changes to the estimates process to improve transparency, and the government will accept those recommendations.

* * *

[English]

TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General revealed today that Treasury Board allowed the former minister of industry to set up a \$47 million slush fund for pork barrel projects in his riding. Here is how it went down: there was the minister, there was a mayor and there was a hotel manager who dished out the loot. There was no oversight, no documentation

and no questions asked. This is just one step up from cash in a brown paper bag.

Is this how the minister will plan to run the Treasury Board?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so much for the civility that the Leader of the Opposition promised Canadians.

At the outset, I want to thank the outgoing Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, not just for this audit but for her outstanding years of public service to Canadians.

I completely reject the premise of the question by the member opposite. The decisions for the funding of these 32 public infrastructure projects were made by me in my time as minister of infrastructure, not by the current president of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing civil about the abuse of taxpayers' trust. The Conservatives misled Parliament. They told us that they were requesting money for border infrastructure and they fuddled it off for pork-barrel projects, such as gazebos, steamboats and everything else the minister could think of. This is the kind of rum bottle, pork barrel politics that Canadians are fed up with.

Will the minister apologize to the taxpayers for this abuse of our public trust?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay is making it up as he goes along. In fact, not one of the 32 projects was a steamship.

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BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. He cannot get around the fact that, in November 2009, the supplementary estimates tabled in Parliament included a request for approval to spend \$83 million for an item entitled, "border Infrastructure fund related to investments in infrastructure to reduce border congestion".

The simple fact is that the government used that money for a completely different purpose. Huntsville is 300 miles away from the closest border in Niagara Falls. How does he explain this bait and switch?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the Liberal Party had looked at the border fund he would have realized that it is frequently used for projects that are not in border communities.

In any case, this program was announced publicly by the government. It was well-known by Parliament. In fact, it was debated several times here in the House of Commons.

The Auditor General, like the leader of the Liberal Party, has made observations on the transparency of the estimates process. There are some improvements that could be made there and we will accept those recommendations.

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also commented on an issue of importance to Canadians, namely the condition of aboriginal communities on reserves. I have a simple question for the Prime Minister.

Is he prepared to show some humility on this issue by acknowledging that his government completely and unilaterally cancelled the Kelowna accord, which would have had a positive impact on the conditions noted by the Auditor General today? Will he—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party should show some humility on this because it did nothing during 13 years in government. Our government has worked with the aboriginal communities. We have made significant investments to improve conditions on the reserves. A lot of work still needs to be done and I hope during this Parliament we will have the support of the Liberal Party to make these significant investments in these communities.

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[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the lack of transparency continues. My colleague from Markham—Unionville has just received a message from the immigration department in Toronto, which reads:

As we are not currently processing any parental sponsorships at this time...this case will be finalized once we get the go-ahead from Management to start working on parental sponsorships again.

If the government is not processing sponsorships for parents coming in from other countries, why does it not have the human decency to tell Canadians and applicants that is what it is doing, instead of this subterfuge it is putting forward?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the leader of the Liberal Party that he is wrong. Through our government plans, we have actually increased the number of newcomers through family reunification this year. We have increased it over the last number of years.

He and his party have their facts incorrect. When it comes to family reunification, it is this government, this party, that is on the right track.

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G20 SUMMIT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the G20 was announced for downtown Toronto with just four months warning. Toronto businesses were given little notice and almost no information. Toronto shop owners lost millions from the G20 but the government dragged its heels on compensation and then wrapped the process in red tape. A year later, they are still waiting.

Oral Questions

When will Toronto businesses be fully and properly compensated for damages and lost revenue from the G20 calamity?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me take this occasion to congratulate my friend, the member for Parkdale—High Park, on a very impressive win. We are very pleased to see her back in Parliament. No one in this place is happier than I am.

The government has a standard plan to provide assistance to those people who suffered damages through no fault of their own. With respect to the city of Toronto and the G20, that applies. I would be very pleased to work with her to expedite the consideration and finalization of any of these initiatives.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it came to spending \$14,000 for glow sticks, Conservatives said, “full steam ahead”; \$300,000 on bug spray, a green light, but for close to \$50 million, what did Toronto get? Broken glass, a fake lake and the biggest mass arrest in Canadian history.

The message is clear. Toronto is at the bottom of the government's priority list. Again, why is the government refusing to fairly compensate Toronto's small businesses?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member opposite on his election to Parliament. We are certainly very committed to work with members opposite and small business people in the city of Toronto to ensure that all compensation that is fair and reasonable and meets the guidelines that the department has in place is paid in as expeditious way as possible.

With respect to the budget, we had men and women of the Canadian Forces, who were out in Muskoka on evenings where there was a considerable amount of potential harm, and that is where that expenditure came down.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Auditor General reported on the abject failure over the past decade by the current and former federal governments to address 15 of her most critical recommendations for first nations. In fact, today's audit reveals worsening conditions for first nation reserve housing, schools and drinking water, a disparity, in the words of Sheila Fraser, unacceptable in a country as rich as Canada.

Will the government today commit to expedited action on the needed laws, measures and dollars to right these wrongs?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government always takes the Auditor General's advice very seriously. The Auditor General's report focuses on what has already happened. We are looking to the future, developing partnerships with aboriginal people across Canada. We have made progress and we are achieving concrete results.

We recognize that more needs to be done. We are in a new phase. This morning the National Chief and I announced a joint action plan on priority areas: education, good governance, economic development, negotiation and implementation.

We have a plan. We work in collaboration and we are results-oriented.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General explained today in her report that the state of the first nations reserves is at a point of no return.

If a reserve has a serious mould problem threatening the health of the community, what does the government do? It sends a pamphlet. Such absurdity has been going on for eight years.

The Auditor General is asking that these problems be addressed through sweeping changes.

What can the government tell us about its plan to resolve these structural problems on the reserves?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I explained previously, we have announced a joint action plan with the national chief this morning.

We are moving from reconciliation, where we have made major progress, into a prosperity agenda. We have agreed on joint priority areas and we will work in collaboration with willing partners because we take the business of getting results very seriously.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives talk tough, today's AG report reveals that the RCMP is crippled by underfunding and it does not have enough resources to fight organized crime.

Communities across Canada, both urban and rural, are struggling against organized crime and gang violence. I have seen it in my own community. The RCMP is supposed to be there to protect Canadians and stop these criminals.

Could the minister explain how underfunding the RCMP is making communities across Canada a safer place for families?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the NDP members have an interest in criminal issues. It remains to be seen whether they will support some

of our initiatives that we need to proceed with in order to make streets safe, including the member's riding.

I read with interest the Auditor General's comments regarding national police services and we fully accept recommendations made by her in the report. I have asked the RCMP to put together a management action plan to address the recommendations made by the Auditor General.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have forgotten about my former colleagues in the Canadian armed forces reserve. Nearly 10 years after the government began implementing a plan for buying back pensions, the plan is only 4% complete. Reservists will have to wait up to seven years to get information about their pension.

What is more, the defence department tried to fix the situation, but it still became worse.

Will the government recognize that it failed on this issue and fix the problem once and for all?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our reservists are a key part of our Canadian Forces. And not just the forces' past, but also their present and their future: 20% of our forces deployed in Afghanistan are reservists. Our government was proud to be the first in 40 years to implement a new pension plan for reservists in 2007.

[English]

LIBYA

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's contribution to the mission in Libya was authorized by Parliament within a clear United Nations mandate: to protect civilians, to enforce a no-fly zone and to obtain a ceasefire.

In light of contradictory public comments by the Minister of National Defence and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs will the government confirm that our mandate remains unchanged and that Canada's engagement does not include effecting regime change in Libya by force?

• (1435)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the motion that the government will put forward next week will be to renew the current existing defence mandate, which will be to protect civilians. We will continue to work within the United Nations framework in that regard.

We will continue with the current military mission that we sought approval for from Parliament.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, part of this issue is around diplomacy.

Today's meeting with the Libya contact group brings together different ministers, top diplomats from around the world, including the United Nations, the Arab League, the African Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It should be an opportunity for Canada to show leadership in diplomacy.

Will the government commit to expanding regional diplomacy so we can see an end to the crisis in Libya?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that Canada can play a robust role with the Libyan contact group. My cabinet colleague is representing Canada at that very important meeting today.

Diplomatically we have to work with our partners in the United Nations, our Arab partners in the region, to not just effect a military mission but also to be diplomatically engaged on humanitarian and development efforts.

Canada, as well as our allies, should have greater engagement with the transitional council in Benghazi.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in certain areas of Libya, food and medication are becoming scarce. So far, barely half of the humanitarian aid requested by the UN has been delivered.

Will this government commit to proposing an increase in humanitarian aid as an integral part of its proposal to extend the mission in Libya?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crisis in Libya is concerning. The situation continues to be volatile, which greatly limits humanitarian access to the country.

In response, Canada provided food for one million displaced Libyans, tents and supplies to 90,000 Libyans, as well as medical supplies and care.

We continue to work with our international partners to monitor the humanitarian situation as it develops.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is trying to de-staff lighthouses or refusing to put money into search and rescue in Newfoundland and Labrador, the government seems willing to put the lives of people at risk. Fishers and oil workers in particular work in a risky environment and the last thing they need is to worry about their safety because of this move.

The location and the knowledge of the 12 people who work at the safety centre are instrumental in avoiding tragedies. It is not a call centre.

How can the government waste millions on fake lakes and gazebos and then cut money from lifesaving search and rescue?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are acting on the strong mandate that we received from Canadians to implement our budget proposals and deficit reduction measures.

I have been very clear all along that safety and operational needs will not be compromised by the consolidation of these call centres. All vessels and helicopters will stay where they are. Coast Guard

employees will continue to live up to their reputation of excellence while performing their duties.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech is a window on the government's priorities. In last Friday's throne speech, not a single word was said about bilingualism, official languages or Canada's linguistic duality. People can draw whatever conclusions they wish. My question is for the President of the Treasury Board, who will be the one to slash public services.

Since the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality is his government's initiative and was just created in 2008, is he willing to promise here today that his government will not cut contributions to official language minority communities identified in the roadmap?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our roadmap for official languages is a five-year agreement. Our commitment to official languages has been clear since our government's first two terms, and remains clear for the third.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Ottawa—Vanier on his re-election to the House.

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USER FEES

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President of the Treasury Board raised the possibility of charging new user fees, but he is hiding the details.

Does this mean there will be processing fees for employment insurance and pensions, or a filing fee at the Canada Revenue Agency—a tax on taxes, in other words? Let us be frank: a user fee is a tax, is it not?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of that is part of our plan. Indeed, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to keep taxes low, to balance the budget by 2014-15 and over the next year we are going to get the waste out of government and conduct a strategic and operating review of all programs.

The purpose of this exercise is not to look at new user fees. In fact, we will find savings so we can pay down the debt and invest in the priorities of Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if this government is so proud of its record in terms of the fight against HIV-AIDS, why is it refusing to participate in the UN summit currently taking place in New York? After 30 years, we still have a long way to go to eliminate this disease. By refusing to take action, this government is playing with the health and lives of millions of people in Canada and around the world. This is another black eye for Canada on the international stage.

Can the minister tell us when she intends to show some leadership on this issue?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work our government has accomplished in helping combat HIV-AIDS not only in Canada but also in the developing world.

The Canadian HIV vaccine initiative, led by our government along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlights Canada's world-class HIV vaccine research expertise and this initiative will help our government advance the science for the development of a safe and effective HIV vaccine.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so proud of her work on HIV-AIDS, then why is she hiding from this major meeting? This international gathering is about the future of the fight against HIV-AIDS, but the minister has effectively removed Canada from any leading role in fighting this global epidemic.

If the Prime Minister can find time in his schedule to fly to Boston to watch a hockey game, surely the minister can find the time to go to New York to help fight AIDS.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, Canada is a world leader in establishing the HIV vaccine initiative globally in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This is not just with Canada but many other countries are involved in the same project.

In addition, last year alone our government provided \$42 million in HIV-AIDS research funding through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which partners not only with Canadian researchers but also the global community.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and Canada Post are presently renegotiating their collective agreement. During this negotiation, Canada Post went ahead and terminated both disability and long-term illness insurance, which workers are entitled to receive. Without it, they will be left with no source of income. What a shame.

Canada Post has no compassion. Will the minister responsible for Canada Post tell it to be humane and restore the benefits workers received before the cancellation? What a shame.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, right now both the union and management are sitting at a negotiating table trying to sort out their differences, trying to get a deal, so the Canadian public is no longer affected either by rotating strikes or infrequent mail delivery. I urge him to work with me in order to encourage the parties to come to a deal.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do not make cuts to disabled people and people who are ill.

[Translation]

The Canada Post Corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers agreed to allow me—as the official opposition's labour critic—to visit the distribution centre in Laval and the Léo Blanchette plant in Montreal. On Thursday, they did an about-face and refused to grant me access to the facilities.

Can the minister responsible for Canada Post tell me if they have something to hide?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has indicated to the member that it is willing to provide the tour once the logistical arrangements can be made. The member knows that we want to work with all parties to ensure Canadians get the best service possible. I look forward to the member seeing the facility and working with Canada Post to ensure that tour occurs when the logistics permit it.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise for the first time in this House, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents of Richmond Hill for the confidence they have placed in me.

Canada has played a leadership role at NATO in the defence of innocent civilians in Libya. We have had reports of the good work of our air force and the work of our sailors on *HMCS Charlottetown*. As we prepare to debate the extension of the Libya mission, could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us what the cost of Canada's commitment to this mission has been?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has indeed taken a leadership role in helping to protect innocent civilians in Libya from the Gadhafi regime that continues to attack them. The member is correct about a forthcoming debate. He will be interested to know that the cost to date, as of June 2 of the mission, was \$26 million. The incremental costs associated with this mission in coming months will be approximately \$10 million per month.

We are extremely proud of the work of Canadian forces members who have been so courageous in reducing the ability of the Gadhafi regime to threaten its own people.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everywhere Canadians turn these days they are getting gouged. The latest proof is an OECD report which shows that Canadians pay some of the highest cellphone fees in the world. In fact, our roaming rates are more than double the OECD average.

Does the minister understand the effects this is having on Canadian cellphone users? When will this minister act?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to ensure that there is healthy competition in Canada. The right decisions will be made in due course, but we want the services offered to be acceptable to Canadian consumers, and that requires healthy competition.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cellphone companies are taking advantage of the government's slack regulations. A Telus executive even admitted Telus could cut its roaming charges in half and still be profitable. Canadians are paying double what our neighbours to the south are.

Will the minister commit to taking the necessary steps to stop this unjustifiable gouging by cellphone companies?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to provide good competition for the consumer. Down the road, we want consumers to have the choice to pick the cellphone they want. For this, we hope to have the support of the opposition parties to move forward on reforms to come.

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[Translation]

PERSONAL DEBT

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2004, personal debt in Canada has increased by 40% and is at an all-time high. In Quebec alone, between 15% to 20% of credit card holders can only make the minimum payment. Families are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. They need help. However, the Conservatives have decided to help someone: the big banks. In the meantime, the Government of Quebec is taking action to protect consumers.

Where is the leadership from the federal government?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for some years now we have heard the concerns expressed, and we have certainly expressed them, with respect to the level of consumer debt. That is why we have taken several steps. Three times we have intervened with respect to the insured residential mortgage market, including this year.

Oral Questions

We also created the code of conduct in co-operation with small business in Canada and small retailers. They have praised that code of conduct with respect to credit cards because it is working.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec has just announced concrete measures to protect families and consumers. Similar measures could be taken by the Conservative government. It could choose to defend families against the voracious appetite of the credit companies, cap credit card interest rates, give financial authorities the power to prohibit excessive fees, and abolish transaction fees that are unfair to consumers and businesses.

When will the government finally take care of consumers?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): As I said, Mr. Speaker, the code of conduct that we developed was done together with small business and consumer groups. It was welcomed by small business and consumer groups.

Unfortunately, the opposition NDP voted against the code, but I gather from the question that I have just heard from the learned member of the NDP that this position will be changing and that he will be supporting our policy on the code of conduct.

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G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, conceivably they could be done through a telephone conference call, but G8 and G20 summits are held, supposedly, to demonstrate to the world collective leadership forged from the rule of law and global stability created by fiscal prudence and respect for democratic institutions. Canada's G8 and G20 legacy? It was a showcase of unfettered and unaffordable spending, self-indulgent decision-making, and deception of democracy and institutions of democracy to arrive at that lavishness. It was quite a beacon to the world.

If the government could do it all over again, could it show some contrition and tell Canadians now that it would do it very differently?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the initial authorizations for funds to these unprecedented back-to-back summits was some \$1.1 billion and we learned from the Auditor General today that they came in almost 40% under budget.

The real lasting legacy of the G8 and G20 summits in Canada is the leadership of the Prime Minister. Canada has a lot to be proud of for the summit resulted in the launch of the maternal, child health initiative, a multi-year initiative plan that will literally save thousands and thousands of lives around the world thanks to the leadership of the Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to today's Auditor General's report of first nations on reserve, under the Conservative watch the education gap has widened, the housing shortage has increased, and half of the drinking water systems on reserves still pose a significant risk to their communities.

The minister just said he is interested in real results. Will he tell the House when 100% of first nations will have adequate housing, when 100% will have safe drinking water, and when 100% of aboriginal youth will have the same educational opportunities as the rest of Canadians?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the comments made by the Auditor General. He said that the first nations are going to have to work closely with government to address some of these impediments and some of these fundamental issues. He said that the openness is there on both parties to deal with some of these fundamental challenges because if we are going to significantly improve the condition on first nations reserves, we need to do this.

I agree with his commentary. That is why we announced a joint action plan with the national chief this morning.

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives promised that there would not be any political interference in the \$35 billion program for the shipbuilding industry, but the cat has been let out of the bag. Several prominent Conservatives met with lobbyists from Vancouver Shipyards and Irving Shipbuilding last fall. That can only lead to political interference.

Why did the Conservatives break their promise?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the member that this is an arm's length process that is actually managed by the shipbuilding secretariat. It is the one that will be evaluating the bids and determining the winners based on the merits of the proposals. In fact, the federal cabinet will not be involved in this decision.

The procurement is also under the careful watch of two high level interdepartmental governance committees, a fairness monitor, an international third-party benchmarking expert, and an independent validation oversight firm, KPMG. So far, the fairness monitor has told me that the process has proceeded fairly.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot say we are going to have an open and transparent process while at the same time many of her Conservative colleagues are meeting with lobbyists when it comes to the shipbuilding industry.

The NDP has advocated for many years for a national shipbuilding strategy based on openness and transparency, and on

the best business case plan. We cannot have Conservative members of Parliament meeting with lobbyists when the minister herself told a CANSEC meeting that lobbyists were to back off.

My question to the minister is quite clear. Why the different messaging here? Is she now going to tell these Conservative members of Parliament to butt out of the system and have a true and open policy?

• (1455)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I can reassure the member that this is an arm's-length process.

It is managed by the shipbuilding secretariat. It is in fact the one who will evaluate the bids based on merit and announce the winners. The federal cabinet will not be involved in this decision.

I can reassure the member by providing him with the quote from the independent fairness monitor that is overseeing this process. He said that so far decisions are made objectively, free from personal favouritism and political influence, and encompasses the elements of openness, competitiveness, transparency and compliance. We will keep it that way.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June 11 is the third anniversary of the historic apology to aboriginals for residential schools. It was one of the many steps that this government has taken on a path of reconciliation with aboriginal Canadians.

Could the minister tell this House what the latest step is in developing the constructive and mutually beneficial relationship?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the steps he has taken to improve the lives of Canadians living on reserve.

Today I was proud to announce, with the national chief, a joint action plan with my department and the Assembly of First Nations. This is a practical, focused plan to improve the lives of first nations people across Canada.

The action plan is a prosperity agenda that targets four shared priorities: education, good governance, economic development, and negotiation and implementation. We are embarking on a new phase.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government was required to submit two greenhouse gas emissions reports in the last month, one to the UN and one to Parliament.

The government told the UN that its climate change policies are up to 10 times more effective than what it told Parliament. The government is telling the UN one thing, while telling Parliament another.

Will the minister tell us which report is accurate and who ordered the changes?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two reports are based on two different compilations of data. With regard to the inventory report to the United Nations framework convention on climate change, we reported that in 2009 the oil sands contributed 6.5% of Canada's total emissions. As reported, this fact is accurate.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the climate change conference in Bonn, government representatives announced, and I quote, "Now that we've finished our election...Canada will not be taking a target under a second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol."

Once again, Canada is trying to hamper the efforts of the international community.

Why did the government go to Bonn? To fight climate change or simply to collect fossil awards?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the assumption in the question is absolutely false.

The only way to achieve real reductions in global emissions is to have a treaty that covers all emitters. The Kyoto protocol fails to do that. Therefore, Canada will not be party to a target under a second commitment period under the Kyoto protocol.

The Cancun agreements based on Copenhagen, on the other hand, form a solid basis for an effective global post-2012 regime that will include all major emitters.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the recent Speech from the Throne Canadians heard that our strong, stable, national Conservative majority government will address the problem of violence against women and girls.

Could the Minister for Status of Women tell this House what our government is already doing to address this issue?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since taking office, our government has invested more than \$30 million in projects to end violence against women and girls all across this country, in addition to the \$10 million we are investing to address the very difficult issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women. To date, we have increased funding to end violence against women and girls to its highest level ever.

We have raised the penalties for violent sexual crimes and we have raised the age of sexual consent from 14 years old to 16 years old to protect girls from sexual exploitation by adult predators.

We will continue to address the issue of violence against women and girls.

* * *

• (1500)

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government had no problem finding a whopping \$668 million for the G8 summit and it had no problem finding \$50 million for perks in the minister's riding but it cannot scrape together the \$700 million to ensure every senior in this country can be lifted out of poverty.

Will the minister stand in the House and explain to our seniors why gazebos are more important than food on the table and living in dignity?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is the one that has been doing the most to help seniors afford the necessities of life and go beyond that. That is why we increased the age credit, not once but twice. We introduced pension income splitting for seniors. We have launched a whole program to help fight financial abuse.

Unfortunately, the hon. member and her party voted against every one of these initiatives to help our seniors.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister and has to do with the 2011 budget implementation bill.

[English]

The budgets of 2009 and 2010 in the Budget Implementation Acts, as we all know, became omnibus bills in which unrelated measures were included.

I would be very grateful if the Prime Minister could stand today and assure this House that there will be no hidden Trojan Horse efforts to undermine other legislation when we see the budget implementation bill next week.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on her election to the House of Commons. I regret that it means we do not have with us any more our dear friend Gary Lunn. I do not know what the member opposite has against munchkins but I am a member of that brotherhood.

We like this budget so much we introduced it twice. I can assure the hon. member that the budget implementation act will, of course, reflect items from the budget that are referenced in the budget.

The GIS payments for seniors, in particular, are very important. We want to get those cheques out in July.

*The Budget***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Clyde Jackman, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first opportunity to ask this traditional question, I want to assure the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons that he will have our full co-operation in standing up for our parliamentary institutions.

That said, could he inform the House as to what business we can expect next week?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome everyone back and congratulate all members on their election or re-election. I would also like to take this opportunity to specifically congratulate the member for Outremont and the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie on their appointments as House leaders of their respective parties.

I am pleased to answer the first Thursday question of the 41st Parliament and to outline to this House our government's agenda as we carry out the strong mandate Canadians gave us on May 2.

[English]

Today, we will continue to debate the budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth.

Monday, June 13, will be the final day of debate on the budget, followed by votes on the NDP amendment and the main motion. Under the order adopted this morning, we will also vote on a ways and means motion that night, which will allow the government to introduce a budget implementation bill which we will hope to debate later in the week. That bill will contain some positive measures of the low tax plan for jobs and growth, including an increase to the guaranteed income supplement for Canada's most vulnerable seniors. I look forward to the opposition party's support to pass this bill in a timely manner.

On Tuesday, the House will debate a motion regarding Canada's involvement in the NATO-led mission in Libya.

• (1505)

[Translation]

The House will be adjourned both this Friday and next Friday, June 17, for the Conservative and NDP conventions, as is the customary practice of the House for political party conventions.

[English]

STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous support for the following motion. I move:

That the Standing Orders be amended by replacing Standing Order 104(2) with the following:

104(2) The standing committees, which shall consist of twelve members, and for which the lists of members are to be prepared, except as provided in section (1) of this Standing Order, shall be on:

- (a) Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development;
- (b) Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics;
- (c) Agriculture and Agri-Food;
- (d) Canadian Heritage;
- (e) Citizenship and Immigration;
- (f) Environment and Sustainable Development;
- (g) Finance;
- (h) Fisheries and Oceans;
- (i) Foreign Affairs and International Development;
- (j) Government Operations and Estimates;
- (k) Health;
- (l) Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities;
- (m) Industry, Science and Technology;
- (n) International Trade;
- (o) Justice and Human Rights;
- (p) National Defence;
- (q) National Resources;
- (r) Official Languages;
- (s) Procedure and House Affairs;
- (t) Public Accounts;
- (u) Public Safety and National Security;
- (v) Status of Women;
- (w) Transport, Infrastructure and Communities; and
- (x) Veterans Affairs.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET**FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

The Budget

The Speaker: Before statements by members started, the hon. member for Wild Rose had seven minutes and 30 seconds left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, our government's economic action plan worked very well to both stimulate the economy and to improve local infrastructure in our municipalities all across the country, especially in my riding of Wild Rose.

However, dealing with the extraordinary consequences of the global financial crisis forced governments worldwide to run budgetary deficits to keep their economies running. Where Canada has proved to be the exception is in how quickly we plan to return to balanced budgets.

In this next phase of the action plan, our government is committed to taking the steps necessary to balance the books. I can say that this is a priority for my constituents. During budget consultations held all across my riding of Wild Rose and during the election, constituents told me time and again that they were eager to secure the economic recovery and balance the books.

This budget responds by committing to balance the books earlier than originally forecast. We will find savings and efficiencies and reduce expenses through a strategic operating review. This important measure will find savings of \$4 billion and help to eliminate the deficit a year earlier than planned. It is important for Canadians to know that this return to balanced books will not be at their expense.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, our Conservative government will maintain transfers to provinces and individuals. Pensioners will not be penalized. Health care, education and our military will be supported. Contrast that with the way in which the previous government gutted provincial transfers and nearly dismantled our country's military capabilities in order to generate its artificial surpluses of the 1990s.

This government will not download the pain of its tough choices on Canadians. This government will not raise taxes. As the private sector revs up again as the engine of growth, our government is forging ahead in a way that meets the needs of Canadians now while creating the right conditions for Canada's long-term economic prosperity.

Some very important measures contained in budget 2011 allow us to do this. For example, we are supporting job creation by helping businesses and entrepreneurs to succeed through a temporary hiring credit for small business that will encourage additional hiring by this vital sector. We are extending the work-sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers to help Canadians stay in the workforce.

The accelerated capital cost allowance for investments in machinery and equipment has been extended for two years, which is of great benefit to Canada's manufacturing and processing sectors.

Furthermore, this budget supports families and seniors. Through our economic action plan, we have enhanced the guaranteed income supplement for vulnerable seniors who rely on old age security and the GIS for their income. The new top-up benefit of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples will improve financial security for more than 680,000 Canadian seniors.

The budget also introduced a family caregiver tax credit and a children's art tax credit to support Canadian families. The caregiver credit will help Canadians who care for infirm dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and children.

In my riding of Wild Rose, there are many rural towns and villages. Budget 2011 strengthens these communities by improving the services Canadians need wherever they choose to live.

Rural and remote communities often have challenges attracting health care workers. To help address this, we are forgiving up to \$40,000 worth of Canada student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurses who choose to work in underserved areas.

In my hometown of Olds, Alberta, I served for a time as a volunteer firefighter. I can tell members firsthand that the volunteer firefighters in my riding and in communities all across the country are sure to appreciate our new tax credit for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service. These are the men and women who selflessly serve and risk their own safety to keep their neighbours safe. It is important to recognize the service they provide to protect the lives and property of Canadians.

A few years ago, our government doubled the gas tax transfers for communities. In Wild Rose, total tax dollars going to our 16 communities immediately jumped from \$4.2 million to over \$8 million. These are funds that municipalities use for their infrastructure priorities, such as the improved water treatment plant that the town of Cochrane invested in with its enhanced gas tax transfer.

• (1510)

Budget 2011 will make the enhanced gas tax transfers permanent for communities, giving them the ability to budget and plan with certainty and help address the priority infrastructure needs of their residents.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention how the action plan benefits some other key sectors in my riding, namely agriculture and forestry. For example, the budget provides \$50 million for a two-year agricultural innovation initiative that will support increased commercialization of agricultural innovations, and it strengthens food safety with an additional \$100 million over five years for improved food inspection.

For our riding's thriving forestry sector, there is a \$60 million innovation fund to help forestry companies tap new business opportunities abroad.

The Budget

Canadians have given our Conservative government a majority mandate so we can stay focused on improving the economy. While Canadians are encouraged by the bright light we now see at the end of the economic tunnel, we are also prudent enough to know that this light could yet be an oncoming freight train, given the uncertainty and fragility of the global economic recovery. That is why our government is committed to nurturing this recovery cautiously and carefully.

In the recent election, Canadians ensured that the obstruction and delays that opposition parties routinely employed in past years will not be a barrier this time to implementing the measures contained in the economic action plan.

In closing, I invite all opposition members to join with us in voting in favour of this budget and show the same commitment our Conservative government has toward achieving the priorities Canadians made very clear on May 2.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned consultations that he had with his constituents, both earlier in the spring and during the election campaign. I am curious to know whether any of those consultations led to any conclusions or advice regarding the discontinuation of the political subsidy for political parties.

• (1515)

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, that is actually something I heard about time and time again during consultations with my constituents over the last couple of years and certainly during the election campaign.

Many of my constituents, in fact I would say the vast majority of them, wanted to see an end to the per vote subsidies going to parties. They knew it was inherently unfair to have a tax on voting and that their tax dollars were somehow going to parties they might not necessarily support. I know I heard that many times in relation to the Bloc Québécois, in particular. They really had an issue with the fact their tax dollars were going to support a political party that wanted separation from this country.

I am very happy to see we have been able to bring forward that measure in this budget, because it will address a huge concern of many Canadians.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the creation of jobs and other things in the budget.

As we know, young people in Canada depend on the Canada summer jobs program to find high-quality jobs during the summer to support their education financially. For too long the funds dedicated to this program have been too low to meet the demands of employers in our country's communities.

These funds prepare our youth for their integration into the workforce.

[Translation]

A number of organizations in my riding that want to hire students are not able to do so, because of a lack of funding. The Canada summer jobs program does more than just provide financial support for young people; it provides support for families. When young

people are unable to find high-quality jobs, they are forced to ask their parents for money.

[English]

Her parents are then stuck with supporting both their own elderly parents and their young children. This does not help families as the Conservatives promised to do—

The Speaker: Order, please. I will have to stop the hon. member there, as I have to leave enough time for the member for Wild Rose to respond.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, there was not really a question there but, obviously, I can speak to some of the issues the member was trying to address.

Certainly, with regard to the summer jobs program, our government has increased the funding for that program by \$10 million.

I also would encourage him to read the budget; it sounds as though he probably has not. I certainly heard in that budget a number of measures in support of jobs for Canadians, be they young Canadians or otherwise. There is the tax credit we are providing for new hires by small businesses. These are things that will provide an opportunity for the private sector in this country to grow this economy and create the jobs that people need. It will do all of those things, increasing economic growth and creating jobs for young and other Canadians.

I would encourage the member to have a good look at the budget and read it thoroughly, because I think he will find it is something he can support in the best interests of all Canadians, if he were to choose to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

The Speech from the Throne and the budget are indicative of how concerned the government is about helping communities hit by disasters, be it flooding or forest fires elsewhere in Canada. I would like some specifics on this.

My riding of Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia was hit by devastating high tides in December. Yesterday and the day before, the Prime Minister spoke about mitigation measures for flooding, be it in Richelieu or Haute-Gaspésie.

How can the budget help the affected communities?

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made some comments on looking at measures that can be put in place. We look forward to seeing those measures as they come forward.

In the meantime, as I highlighted in my speech, there are the gas tax transfers going to municipalities, which I think all communities need to recognize as something that can help them improve their infrastructure. We have doubled those transfers and made them permanent so that communities can plan and count on them as a dedicated fund that is there for their community infrastructure priorities.

• (1520)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I am pleased to announce that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

I want to take this first opportunity I have to thank the people of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for the confidence they have shown in me. It is a very nice region in the Lower St. Lawrence, near the majestic river.

I would like to inform the House that one of the key promises on which I was elected was to create a round table for provincially and federally elected officials from the Lower St. Lawrence. In the Lower St. Lawrence region, we have three federal MPs: two New Democrats and one Bloc Québécois colleague. At the provincial level, we have four MNAs: three from the Parti Québécois and one from the Liberal Party. A round table is essential for ensuring that in a region like the Lower St. Lawrence, we are speaking with one voice when we need to present our claims or requests either in Quebec City or in Ottawa. This concerted effort is also essential in dealing with a major challenge in my riding and several other ridings, namely regional economic development.

Regional economic development is essential for these regions. Unlike major centres, these regions do not necessarily have the density to allow the same type of economic development. Federal and provincial government assistance is needed to facilitate the development of essential projects and to help boost the economy.

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be so essential for this government since the budget plan it presented proposes reducing funding for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec by 31%, from \$430 million to \$296 million. It is bit hard to understand, especially when the budget plan mentions with regard to support programs for industries, the regions, science and technology that:

The industrial, regional and scientific-technological support programs sector comprises those departments, agencies and Crown Corporations that deliver programs which foster economic growth and job creation....

The problem with this government is that it does not make the distinction between straight-up expenses and investments. Investments are needed to ensure profitability and a return not only for the people of the riding or the region, but also for the people of Quebec and Canada.

The total budget line mentions a 31% reduction in the budget of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, but the program to support technology, the regions, infrastructure, and science will be cut by nearly 33%, falling from \$15 billion to \$10 billion. This clearly reflects priorities that are retrograde and harmful to the future economic development of the country.

The budget is contrary to the interests of my region, for example in regard to forestry, which is very close to my heart. I used to work in forestry as an economist and researcher. In the depths of the great recession, when the government thought it was great to give the automotive industry more than \$10 billion in loan guarantees and

The Budget

subsidies, the forestry sector got a mere \$170 million. Once again, the budget does not help forestry workers because it provides only \$60 million, largely for research and development that will only benefit us in the long run.

The people in the forestry sector, the workers and communities, need help now. They do not need meaningless grants. They need assistance to make the transition from outdated market niches that are uncompetitive to new areas where they can compete. The forest industry needs this government help, as do the union members and communities that depend on forestry.

Since 2004, more than 75,000 people have lost their jobs in the forest industry. In Quebec alone, more than 20,000 people have lost their jobs. Two hundred and thirty-five mills have closed their doors. In many remote communities, forestry is the main economic activity. It accounts for 3% of Canada's GDP and 12% of its manufacturing GDP. We cannot allow it simply to wither away, as is currently being done.

• (1525)

In 2008, the former member for Pontiac promised a national summit on the future of the forest industry in Canada, in which the companies, unions, communities and first nations were to take part. Since then, though, all we have heard from this government is complete and utter silence.

In view of this silence and the negative decisions regarding the funding of regional economic development for Quebec and other regions of Canada, which have just been left hanging, and in view of the fact that the government continues to ignore the issues that are damaging forestry and the communities dependent on it, I cannot vote for this budget.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member on his very humanistic approach to a budget with many negative aspects. Although we are very pleased with the \$2.2 billion for Quebec, we cannot help but notice that the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has put his finger on a problem.

The forestry industry remains a major problem for many communities in Quebec. I know that the hon. member has a lot of expertise in this area. I would like him to talk more about the amounts promised in this budget. How will this create a problem? We have heard a lot about the support the Conservative government has given to the manufacturing and automotive industries, among others. I am very worried about the difference in the amounts allocated to the forestry industry, some tens of millions of dollars here and there to various regions of Quebec. The riding of Gatineau is also affected by this problem, as we saw with the Bowater mill. The same thing is also happening in Pontiac and Papineau—Mirabel—Argenteuil.

Could the hon. member talk about some of the solutions that this government could have proposed?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Gatineau. It is indeed a very relevant question.

We do not necessarily need to limit our discussion to this budget; we could talk about all of the budgets presented by this government since it was first elected in 2006.

The Budget

The forestry crisis has been affecting all sectors of Quebec, the forestry sector overall, since at least that time. I mentioned over 20,000 jobs lost. Early on, loan guarantees could have been granted. The problems experienced by companies like AbitibiBowater, Fraser Papers, Domtar and others could have been avoided if the government had done what it did for the auto sector and had granted loan guarantees to allow those companies to borrow money at market rates. Given the financial difficulties they faced, they had to borrow at absolutely outrageous interest rates—between 15% and 20%—which made it impossible for them to become profitable again.

The government wasted no time signing a softwood lumber agreement that prohibits loan guarantees. The London court issued a ruling on that. Therefore, this eliminated one possible way of helping the industry.

Now the industry itself is realizing the problems that exist. It needs to distance itself from areas like pulp and paper and softwood, that is, areas in which it is becoming harder to compete internationally, and it needs to find new niches. The industries are now ready to do so, but the help just is not there. This would require changes—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I posed a question a little earlier for one of his NDP colleagues and I would very much appreciate an answer. My question was in regard to the way in which the government finances health care.

Some would argue that ultimately we should have cash transfers toward health care, much stronger in terms of that sort of argument, versus tax point transfers, something for which the Bloc has been a very strong advocate, believing that Quebec's interest would be better served by tax points. That would be the argument of Bloc members.

I look to the new member for the riding in Quebec. What does he feel is the most appropriate way to finance health care in the province of Quebec? Would it be through cash transfers or tax points?

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I have worked in health care and health care public policy. Funding through cash transfers is allowed and has been the federal government's policy. This allows accountability regarding federal spending. Tax points are another way of doing things. However, greater decentralization might be better. Considering the current role of the federal government with its Canada Health Act—whose five principles or pillars were supported by the former Bloc leader in 2009—we think it is important to maintain the minimum standards derived from these five principles under the Canada Health Act. Accordingly, we support cash transfers.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry. First of all, I want to thank

the people of my riding for the confidence they showed in me. I will defend their interests every day. I also want to thank my family, my friends, my precious volunteers, the staff of Baie-Saint-François school and my dear students, who encouraged me throughout the election campaign.

Communities like mine did not just choose a new member of Parliament. I humbly accept, of course, the mandate they have given me to work constructively for the NDP and with all the members of this House to achieve tangible results.

I have talked with people who cannot get to sleep because they are so worried about their retirement income. Our seniors cannot make ends meet any more because their income has stopped rising. Beauharnois—Salaberry is in the Montérégie region, which holds the North American record for the greatest increase in the number of seniors. Some of them want the guaranteed income supplement increased and they want it made automatic. Many did not know they were entitled to it until they heard about it from friends.

The government should therefore be fairer and more transparent in its delivery of guaranteed income supplement benefits and it should ensure that our seniors no longer live under the poverty line. All socio-economic areas will feel the effects of our aging population, including health. According to figures from Quebec's health department, hospital visits in Quebec have increased by 3.5% since 2010 and the number of patients aged 75 or older has increased by nearly 6%. In case the government has not noticed yet, there is a shortage of medical care all across the country.

I have spoken with people in my riding who cannot find a family physician, who wait in emergency rooms for more than 17 hours, on average, or who wait months to see a specialist. Specialists are very hard to find in Beauharnois—Salaberry and it is hard to attract them there.

Finally, has the government ever taken an interest in the tough lives of nurses? When will it make the necessary investments to deal with the shortage that forces them to work overtime in order to ensure that patients have continuity of care? This is very worrisome. The Conservatives should strengthen the public health care system instead of trying to privatize it, which not only widens the gap between rich and poor but also leaves our health care professionals overburdened. Increasing the number of doctors and nurses in the system, as proposed by the NDP, is a social investment that absolutely must be made.

The people of Beauharnois—Salaberry are also very critical of the government's lack of leadership on social housing. There has been a housing crisis in Quebec since 2000, and the situation has hardly improved at all for large and low-income families. The vacancy rate in several municipalities in my riding was around 2% in 2010. The government knows very well that this rate should be at least 3% in order to have a balanced rental market. Otherwise, there is a housing shortage.

There is a need for hundreds of new units for the riding, which is one of the poorest in the region. Access to affordable, safe, clean housing is an important factor in someone's level of health and it has a direct impact on the reality of homelessness. However, the government seems completely indifferent to this reality, since the latest budget does not include any investments in social housing. This is the first time in 10 years that the federal government has not allocated any money to this area. For Quebec, that is a loss of \$85.6 million compared to the last two years, which is the equivalent of 1,200 affordable housing units.

Furthermore, the Minister of Finance has once again refused to increase the budget allocated to fighting homelessness, which has not been indexed in eight years. Yesterday, I spoke to representatives of the PACT de rue organization. They told me that the government needs to create a homelessness policy in order to develop an overall vision of the phenomenon and take concrete action. The fight against homelessness must be considered a collective responsibility. The Réseau solidarité itinérance du Québec has developed a platform to advocate for and defend the rights of the homeless who are excluded from society and marginalized. This year, the Nuit des sans-abri will focus on the right to a decent income, which includes improved access to employment insurance. It will also focus on five other rights, including the right to occupy public spaces.

Our community organizations are very proactive in the fight against homelessness.

• (1535)

For example, over 30 local organizations implemented a housing service for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who run away from home or are forced to leave home, in order to help them reintegrate into an environment that has been deemed acceptable.

Since April 1, 2008, the number of youth who have benefited from the program has doubled from 14 to 30 per year. It would be to the government's advantage to focus on prevention measures for youth rather than focusing on its tough on crime agenda and investing in prisons.

I have spoken with other people who have lost their full-time jobs and now have to deal with unstable part-time jobs with no benefits. The Conservatives' lack of action in this regard is exasperating to many families in my riding. In just seven years, over 2,200 jobs were lost in Beauharnois—Salaberry. Yesterday, the Rio Tinto Alcan recasting centre in Beauharnois contacted me to tell me that 10 more jobs may be lost in the coming months.

The number continues to grow since the government decided to close the border crossing in Franklin in April.

In so doing, not only has the government eliminated jobs and decreased civil security, it has also negatively affected tourism in the region and thus the region's economy, since visitors will no longer come to this area, which is well known for its magnificent orchards.

People in the community have not yet managed to wrap their heads around this decision, particularly since the American government is planning to add more border crossings. The government should talk to the Americans before hurting the economy of its own people.

The Budget

Here is an example of a third situation in which the Conservatives' choices leave something to be desired. Last Saturday, I met with one of the employees responsible for visitor activities at the Lake St. Francis National Wildlife Area. She indignantly explained that the Canadian Wildlife Service, which falls under Environment Canada, cut over 60% of their budget. Rather than receiving the \$24,000 it usually receives every year, the park is expected to provide the same visitor services and educational services, do the same monitoring and maintenance and produce the same outcomes with only \$10,000 over the coming years. It borders on the ridiculous.

Is the government aware that the team that works at this national wildlife area provides environmental education through water activities that do not leave an environmental footprint, creates good jobs, develops positive and lasting relations with the Mohawk people on the Akwesasne reserve, and helps to promote tourism in the region? If so, how can it choose to take funds away from an environmental protection organization that does so much good for our region? The government's attitude is unacceptable and disrespectful.

Finally, in my riding many people are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing major polluters instead of standing up for the environment.

People who live near the U.S. border along New York State have been waiting for three years for the government to intervene in the Westville dump issue. People are worried because the landfill site is being expanded to six times its current surface area, which could end up depriving 100,000 people of drinking water in the event of an environmental mishap.

The dump is just above a water table that supplies the Upper St. Lawrence area. It is easy to see how the project might have disastrous consequences for people in terms of health, property value and contamination of farmland and ranchland.

In 2008, a coalition against this landfill project was formed and more than 6,000 people signed a petition. The government still has not taken charge of the situation or defended the interests of the people of my riding.

We are an official opposition that has its priorities in the right place and does not hesitate to defend them. We will propose practical solutions for families and we will oppose the government whenever it makes bad decisions. We will work together to achieve tangible results that will put the country on the right path. I will stand up for the well-being of all my constituents.

• (1540)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for her win and also for speaking to her concerns so eloquently.

In my province of British Columbia the former NDP provincial government did not add a single new doctor space to the UBC Faculty of Medicine in an entire decade. With support from our government in transfer payments for health care, today British Columbia has doubled the number of new doctors being trained.

The Budget

Will the NDP acknowledge the increased health care transfer in our budget and will it support it?

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, the NDP has always advocated for more doctors and nurses in the public health care system. No action has been taken since we first called for this. People are still lining up to get a family doctor. Nurses are still being forced to work overtime. Clearly the NDP is in favour of increasing the number of family doctors.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, picking up on the previous question, the NDP has been in government in Manitoba for the last 11 years.

Many rural communities in Manitoba do not have doctors. In fact, they have not had doctors for years. There has been a lot of talk in Manitoba for years that we need to get more doctors into our communities. There is a sense of disappointment, whether it is in rural Manitoba or even in north end Winnipeg, where it is difficult to find a GP. It seems that the provincial government has not been able to meet the needs.

To what degree does the member believe the federal government and what specifically does she think the federal government could do to ensure that there are going to be more doctors for our communities?

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. As I mentioned, the opposition—the NDP—is in favour of federal investment in health care to increase the number of doctors and health care professionals.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry on a very fine presentation today. I am sure her constituents will be impressed by her ability to represent them in the House and also by her knowledge not only of the issues but of the many issues in her own constituency that she can bring to the floor of the House.

In terms of generating more doctors and nurses in Canada, the NDP policy has talked about increasing the number of students in professional schools as well with federal support.

In terms of nurses, I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that nurse practitioners can also play a role as part of the medical team to present primary health care in clinics throughout her riding and throughout Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. Nurses are a key part of the health care system, and their work of providing care to patients is very important. The more opportunities we give them, the better they will be able to do their job and provide numerous services to patients.

• (1545)

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the name of my riding is so difficult to pronounce. I would like to congratulate

the NDP member on her speech. She and I have many of the same values and social concerns. However, I am wondering how we can reach the fundamental objective of increasing the number of family doctors and nurses in the public health care system. I would prefer a public system to a private one, but what can we do when the provinces are usually worried that the federal government is infringing on provincial areas of jurisdiction? This is especially true of Quebec, which is quite clear that it does not want any infringement on its areas of jurisdiction.

How can we inject more money into the health care system, as the NDP wants, given Quebec's concerns about respect for its areas of jurisdiction?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. The NDP is very concerned about respect for provincial jurisdictions. However, there is the Canada Health Act to consider. Any funds invested in health care will be allocated at the discretion of the provinces. We want to improve the public health care system. We are proposing an increase in the number of doctors and nurses, which could only improve the system and relieve the pressure in emergency rooms.

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Huron—Bruce.

As this is my first opportunity to speak in the House during the 41st Parliament, I would like to take a moment to thank the voters of Palliser for the trust that they have placed in me by re-electing me to this place. I am humbled by the many opportunities I have had to serve the communities of Saskatchewan as a principal, a mayor, a consultant, a director of education, a director of provincial examinations and now as an MP. I am proud to serve with this government and will continue to work to make things better for the residents of Palliser and Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Speaker on his election and I would be remiss if I did not take the time to congratulate all other members of the House who are serving for the first time or who have been re-elected.

I welcome this budget which will form the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a good budget for Saskatchewan and the riding of Palliser and it will bring benefits to my constituents. This budget is an important step in ensuring that Canada's government is supporting Canadians as we work our way out of the economic crisis and into a period of sustained economic growth.

Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth thanks to our action plan and its parts. These parts benefit the measures that have been added to things like 540,000 new jobs to the Canadian economy and all measures point toward this trend continuing. Although the recession of 2008-09 set back the economies of Saskatchewan and Canada, the measures that our government took to deal with these problems put Canada's economy on the right track.

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In my riding, the economic action plan helped convince Thunder Creek Pork to create 200 much needed new jobs for Moose Jaw residents. Our government also worked with Premier Brad Wall and the government of Saskatchewan to develop the global transportation hub, which has already created 800 new jobs for the people of Saskatchewan and will create many more in the years to come as companies relocate their facilities for centralized distribution.

More importantly, however, the economic action plan took important steps to save jobs and protect the finances of Canadians. Measures such as the tax-free savings account helped give Canadians the confidence they needed to invest adequately and to help ensure their profits went to their pockets and not to the pockets of government.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on the successes of these measures and introduces a number of new ways in which Canada's government can help Canadians help themselves. Measures such as the fitness tax credit demonstrate that our government is working to help all Canadians help themselves by encouraging good and healthy lifestyle choices. Our budget demonstrates our commitment to getting things done for all Canadians and I am encouraged to see that this will continue both now and in the next four years.

Let us take a minute to talk about agriculture. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will also provide benefits that will promote sustainable agriculture. Programs such as a \$50 million two-year agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and increased commercialization of agricultural development will benefit agriculture-related businesses across Canada, including those in Saskatchewan.

In Moose Jaw, Thunder Creek Pork will benefit from the initiative for the control of diseases in the hog industry, which will be extended for an additional two years. There will also be \$24 million provided in order for the Canadian Swine Health Board to complete initiatives directed at national bio-security standards and best management practices that will benefit hog producers across the country.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will also work to strengthen food safety by providing \$100 million over five years toward targeted investments for inspector training, additional science capacity and electronic tools to support the work of front line inspectors.

I am sure that my constituents in Palliser will welcome the action that our government is taking to build on the support in place for seniors by providing new measures to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities for older Saskatchewanians and all Canadians.

• (1550)

In this budget we are taking action to support seniors through the expansion of several programs, such as the guaranteed income supplement, which we are topping up by \$600 per year for single seniors and by up to \$840 per year for senior couples.

We are also proposing to expand the new horizons for seniors program, which would receive an additional \$10 million over two years to provide funding to organizations that help ensure that Saskatchewan seniors can benefit from activities that improve their

quality of life through active living and participation in social activities.

Also in support of seniors, we are proposing to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code to ensure that federally regulated employees across Canada will be able to choose how long they wish to remain in the labour force, based on their individual circumstances.

We are working hard to support justice and public safety. Through the budget, the government is working with the provinces to invest \$20 million in youth crime prevention programs, including several programs in Saskatchewan. In these programs, we are proposing to promote community-based educational, cultural, sporting and vocational opportunities for youth to encourage them to make smart choices and encourage them to resist pressure to become involved in gangs.

Although our government continues to plan to end the long gun registry, in the meantime we will continue to waive licensing fees of up to \$80. I can assure residents of Palliser that we will not rest until this registry is repealed. I look forward to seeing legislation to do this being introduced in the future.

As a supporter of victims' rights, I am proud that we will continue to support this position by providing \$26 million over two years to help the federal victims ombudsman, which will help provide access to justice and encourage participation in the justice system by victims, including victims from Saskatchewan.

As an individual who has been deeply involved in the education system of the province, I am proud that the government is taking real action to improve the financial stability of Canadian students so that they can take steps to better their own prospects. Through our budget, our government is proposing to enhance and expand access to eligibility for Canadian student loans and grants for full- and part-time post-secondary students. Post-secondary students from Saskatchewan and across Canada will benefit from several steps that our government is taking in order to increase the tax exemptions that students are eligible for.

I understand that the government is working with the province and territorial partners to put its proposed improvements into place as quickly as possible so as to have the benefits flowing to students in the 2011 academic year.

As someone who knows the benefits that higher education can bring to people of all ages, I applaud the steps the government is taking to make education more affordable to all.

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I am proud to be part of a government that is reducing the tax burden on Canadians. Since being elected in 2006, our government has lowered the tax burden on individual Canadians by an average of \$3,000 per person. In Saskatchewan, the measures proposed in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will provide taxpayers with approximately \$60 million in tax relief over 2010-2011 and the following five fiscal years, including over \$13 million through the family caregiver tax credit and almost \$19 million through the new children's arts tax credit.

I am encouraged to see that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes steps to improve the fairness and neutrality of the tax system. Improving the integrity of our tax system means lower tax rates for all. All members of this House can agree that lower tax rates are better for Canadians.

In conclusion, with these important improvements to all aspects of Canada's interactions with government, I am proud to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting this important budget.

I look forward to hearing from all members about their thoughts on the budget.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the member on his speech.

I paid particularly close attention to his comments on the parts of the budget concerning seniors, because I too care deeply about seniors. I think this is true of all of my colleagues in the NDP, since we ran a very strong campaign on this very issue and 59 ridings in Quebec voted for the NDP platform. I have a few questions about the government's position in the budget regarding the guaranteed income supplement.

The member made a point of telling us he is happy about the \$600 a year increase. I will address only the increase he mentioned for single seniors. Based on my calculations, we are talking about \$50 a month, and that bothers me. Yesterday evening, I took part in an event with people from the Alzheimer Society, and I spoke with many seniors about the budget. They asked me if it was some kind of joke, since \$50 a month does not even cover the increase in the price of gas, for example. The member talked about amending the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to allow seniors to retire whenever they want, but they will not have a choice. I understand that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms needs to be amended, because right now, they will not be able to retire and collect a pension, because they will be forced to work.

How does the member respond to the comments I heard from seniors yesterday evening?

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that we have, as a government, supplied more help for seniors than any other elected body that has sat in this House. There have been decreases in terms of shutting down the expansion of sales tax; it started at 7%, then went to 6% and then to 5%. That number affects all seniors.

The CPP has been directed to help seniors, and it has, because all of us pay into the program. The additional \$600 and \$840 particularly will help seniors as they move forward. This is not meant to be all of their funding, but it will be a start for funding. My constituents are most pleased with that increase.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Given that the member is from Saskatchewan, I am sure he has the pulse of the community in terms of what the wheat farmers in Saskatchewan are saying with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board.

My understanding is that support for the Canadian Wheat Board is well in excess of 65% across the Prairies and is even greater in Saskatchewan, yet for whatever reasons, reasons that many would suggest are of an ideological nature, the government has made the decision to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board, even though a majority of the wheat farmers in Saskatchewan, a good number of whom I suspect supported him, would not want to see the Wheat Board go away.

Does the member see the value in allowing the wheat farmers to determine whether or not the Wheat Board should remain?

• (1600)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is not going to disappear. The idea of the Canadian Wheat Board is that it will take its place as an independent agency like every other agency that buys grain. It is not going to disappear; it is going to be matched up with other operations that purchase grain.

The constituents in Palliser were very vocal and very pointed in their direction. They said they did not want a monopoly. Currently the Canadian Wheat Board has a monopoly: either the farmer sells through the Canadian Wheat Board or the farmer does not sell wheat and barley.

The farm folks do not think that is right. They produce it and they should have the right to say where they market it.

We are of that same mindset, and that is the direction I am sure we will move with the agriculture sector.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too congratulate the member on his re-election.

This is my first opportunity to address the House since my last election. First and foremost, I would like to thank the constituents of Huron—Bruce for putting their faith in me in yet another election. These elections are hard work, and it is an honour and a privilege to serve such a great riding as Huron—Bruce.

As well, I note that we were able to achieve some historic results in the last election, receiving the largest number of votes ever in the history of Huron—Bruce's riding as well as the largest margin of victory. Certainly the government's actions over the last number of years have made a significant impact on the voters in Huron—Bruce.

I would be remiss if I started my speech without thanking my wife, Andrea, for her support during the three elections I have participated in. As well, I thank my parents and my in-laws. They provide tremendous support.

I would also like to thank the great number of volunteers who help day in and day out, year in and year out, to carry on these election campaigns. Volunteers are important not only for our party but for the other political parties. They help carry on the democratic process, so we certainly owe a big thanks to all those who have volunteered.

I would like to highlight some aspects of the budget.

Much of the budget presented June 6 was also captured in the budget that was presented on March 22. We have heard much debate in the last number of days, but I thought it would be important to highlight a few pieces in the budget that would have an impact on rural Canada, rural Ontario and even perhaps the riding of Huron—Bruce.

First and foremost would be the commitment again to the eco-energy retrofit program. This has been a popular program coast to coast and certainly in the riding of Huron—Bruce. It provides a great number of economic opportunities. It allows citizens in Huron—Bruce to upgrade their homes, whether through insulation, windows, doors, a new furnace or what have you. It provides them an opportunity to make their homes more energy efficient.

The other opportunities it provides are economic. We have a few manufacturers in the riding of Huron—Bruce. An example is Dashwood Industries, which manufactures certified and approved windows that would go into retrofitted homes from coast to coast. I would encourage all Canadians who are thinking of using this program to make sure they ask their contractors to install Dashwood Industries windows. As well, MDL Doors provides a great quality product and is located outside of Brussels, Ontario. It would provide insulated doors for homes.

These are great opportunities, and the economic spinoff always follows through to the individuals who audit the households as well as to the contractors who provide the work. In spite of the fact that it has been a wet spring, a program such as this is going to be another stimulus to the construction industry and is certainly welcome.

We also know Huron—Bruce is a very significant agricultural riding, and this government's commitment to agriculture in many consecutive budgets has certainly been appreciated.

There have been a few highlights in this budget for new money in agriculture. Foremost is the \$100 million investment over five years to the CFIA to help implement the Weatherill report that came out of the listeriosis outbreak a couple of years ago. This investment will help the CFIA to fully implement the recommendations in that report.

As well, there is \$50 million over the next two years for innovation and research in agriculture. We know the agricultural community welcomes these dollars. It realizes the importance of innovation and research in continuing to push along the agricultural products we produce in Canada. The riding of Huron—Bruce welcomes those dollars for innovation because we know we have taken great advantage of those investments, as our yields certainly indicate.

There is also about \$24 million over two years committed to the hog industry. These are vitally important dollars that are going to address some issues around disease. The circovirus issue a number

of years ago caused great strain to the hog industry, so added dollars to help the hog industry in Canada are certainly welcome.

● (1605)

From my perspective, the budget delivered a couple of days ago addresses these issues and will help push agriculture forward.

Also vitally important to agriculture are our export markets. It is important that we continue to push forward with our international bilateral free trade agreements.

The minister has been working hard on two vitally important trade agreements, the Canada-EU trade agreement and the Canada-India trade agreement. These will give farm exporters the opportunity to provide their goods tariff-free to nearly two billion people. They have a combined GDP of nearly \$20 billion.

These are certainly welcomed by the agricultural community, especially in Huron—Bruce. The white bean capital of the world is located in Hensall in my riding of Huron—Bruce. It is the white bean capital of the world due in large part to the producers and the heads of co-ops. These agreements provide us with a great opportunity with respect to trade.

Our government has completed eight bilateral free trade agreements since 2006. We have more than 50 on the go right now that would provide Canada with a great competitive advantage on the world market. In addition to that, we are working closely with the countries to educate them on the great regiment that our producers and our processors maintain in Canada to produce world-class food and commodities.

The Conservative government's 2011 budget addresses a great number of these issues. The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of International Trade have worked very hard abroad to continue to open these markets.

There are a great many manufacturers in Huron—Bruce. Another important aspect in the budget for manufacturers is the two year extension of the capital cost allowance that will allow manufacturers to do an accelerated 50% straight line depreciation on new plants and machinery. This is important because it will allow our manufacturers to continue to make investments in plant and plant machinery to continue to make Canada more competitive. This is an area we need to address. The government is committed to reduce tariffs on machinery bought outside of Canada. This is a tremendous opportunity.

I worked in the automotive parts manufacturing sector for many years at Westcast Industries. This company has really taken advantage of the opportunity in recent years to upgrade its machinery to make its products more competitive so it can produce a product at a lower price, which allows it to add more employees. The manufacturing community coast to coast appreciates this and I certainly appreciate this because it helps manufacturers in the riding of Huron—Bruce.

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In addition, we have provided a hiring credit for small businesses. It will help offset the employment insurance premiums that small and medium-sized businesses will pay when they hire new employees. This will help about half a million small businesses from coast to coast. The economy is recovering. Canada has come through the recession better than any other developed nation. This is another way to help businesses create new jobs and not impede the hiring of new employees. Canada was built by small business. The backbone of rural communities such as Huron—Bruce are agriculture and small business. This is another tool in the tool box of small business to allow it to be competitive and not afraid to hire new employees.

Huron—Bruce is a beautiful tourist community located along the coastline of Lake Huron. It is a place where people come to retire. The commitment in this year's budget to add another \$300 million to the guaranteed income supplement is welcome and appreciated. This will increase the income of low income seniors, and they will appreciate that. They appreciate a government that looks out for seniors.

The government brought in pension splitting in past budgets and that has also been a great tool for seniors to make their retirement dollars spread forward.

The budget document is 375 pages. I could on for days, but I realize I only have 10 minutes.

• (1610)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget speaks of a plan for responsible spending to deliver programs and services more efficiently. Does this mean the hon. member will guarantee that the government will stop its own wasteful spending, such as the quarter million dollars in speech writing services spent by the previous minister of transport? Will the member guarantee it will cut its own pork before it cuts essential services of Canadians?

Why does the government insist on telling Canadians that we need to cut services when it will not cut its own wasteful spending?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the member will note that my speech was not written, so I have no dollars invested in speech writers. This comes from the heart.

I would ask the member opposite how he feels about the per vote subsidy and if he is willing to look at that as a possible opportunity to reduce partisan spending. That would save Canadian taxpayers \$30 million year in and year out. I would offer that up for that hon. member, to take a long hard look at that and perhaps support our commitment for saving taxpayer dollars.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member inform the House of his and his party support or lack thereof for the proposal to create a two-tiered guaranteed income supplement program?

The member must be aware that under the current terms and conditions of eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement program, the GIS program, senior citizens would have to earn a baseline income of approximately \$16,000 a year or less. There are various grades and scales to that, but that is the baseline. However, the government's proposal is to reduce this, to create a second tier of

benefits, a two-tiered program whereby any senior citizen making \$7,000 a year or less would be the only ones eligible for the top-up the government is proposing.

Is the hon. member and his government suggesting that those senior citizens who make anywhere between \$7,000 and \$16,000 are living in the laps of luxury?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hyperbole. I also remind him that a couple of months ago, when his party was on this side of the House, it had an opportunity to make an investment of \$300 million for our low income seniors. That member voted for another option for the \$300 million. He voted for a wasteful, unnecessary election. He voted for election signs.

This side of the House voted for seniors and low income seniors specifically on this initiative, yet he has the audacity to get up today and ask about this government's commitment to low income seniors.

He had better look in the mirror tonight when he goes home and ask himself this question. Was the \$300 million better spent on low income seniors or on his wasteful \$300 million worth of election signs?

• (1615)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, it is great to hear that the member opposite extolls the virtue of the eco-energy program because it was the Conservatives that cut it initially and our party fought to keep it. If it is such a job creator, which it is, and so good for the environment, we do not understand why it was cut in the first place.

We welcome the government's decision to put that back in the budget. However, we are mystified by the fact that it is only in it for one year.

Is this a good job creation program for just one year or is it a good job creation program? That is the question I would like to ask the member opposite.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, what I would offer for the hon. member are the copies I have in my office of the last three budgets. In there are dollars allocated to the eco-energy program.

I know the member is new to the House. That is fine. The fact is when his party sat over there, it voted against it each and every time.

He may be mystified as to why we put it back in. I am mystified as to why his party has always voted against it.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Rivière-du-Nord.

On May 2, the voters of LaSalle—Émard entrusted me with a great responsibility, and it is a privilege for me to be their member of Parliament. It is an honour to rise for the first time in this House on behalf of the people of LaSalle—Émard. First, I would like to thank my constituents for trusting in me. I would also like to commend them for daring to vote for change. I want to highlight their courage and their belief that we can change things and do better, and that it is possible to do politics differently. I will be listening to their concerns. Every day I will defend their interests, and I will be pleased to work for them for the next few years.

[English]

What an honour it is for me to rise in the House for the first time on behalf of the people of LaSalle—Émard. Above all, today, I want to thank my constituents for the confidence they have placed in me. I will put their priorities front and centre every day. I will be listening to their concerns and working to make their lives better. It will be a pleasure to be at their service.

[Translation]

Communities like mine did not simply choose a new member of Parliament. On May 2, they sent a clear message: we can change things; we can do better. That is the message sent by 1.5 million Quebecers out of a total of 4.5 million Canadians across the country. They all came to share the NDP's vision for a better Canada, a Canada where families are a priority and where no one is left behind, a country Quebecers can identify with, and a country that reflects their progressive values.

I am proud that my constituents are participating in this wave of change, and I humbly accept the mandate they have given me. I accept their mandate to stand up for families and make them a priority. I accept their mandate to work constructively with all members of this House to get concrete results, because the challenges we spoke of during the campaign are the same challenges that my community faces.

I listened carefully as the government members presented their budget. I would like to remind my distinguished colleagues in the government that the economy is a means, not an end. I am here to speak for all the people of LaSalle—Émard, but especially those who are without a voice, who cannot benefit from tax cuts, who cannot find affordable housing or stable, well-paid employment, or who cannot find a family doctor.

I am here to lend my voice to those who are not as fortunate as we are in this House. I am here for those who have been left behind by our society, those who are the most vulnerable. I hope to make my colleagues on the other side understand that they are here for all Canadians, whatever their origins or standard of living. The values we embody are those of social justice, sharing and mutual assistance. That is why I find it difficult to see any reflection of myself in this government's program. Their priority is big business, to the detriment of small businesses and the people of my riding.

• (1620)

[English]

I remind members that the economy is a means, not an end. It is a way to organize our society. I believe the role of government is to

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ensure that all Canadians have a chance to succeed. I believe we are at the service of all citizens, from all walks of life.

During the campaign, I had the privilege of meeting many of my constituents. It was really amazing to see people open their doors and share with me their concerns and their hopes. I had the pleasure of meeting many new Canadians. They talked to me about the difficulties of bringing their loved ones to Canada and of gaining Canadian experience so they could contribute fully to our economy.

Since being elected, I have received numerous requests from immigrants who want to find their way through the morass of immigration regulations. I salute their perseverance and patience. I will do my best in helping them to find their way.

[Translation]

During the election campaign, people opened their doors to me. They told me their hopes and fears. I spoke with people who are worried about their retirement incomes and with seniors who can no longer make ends meet because the cost of living keeps rising while their income does not. I spoke with people in my riding who cannot find a family doctor or have to wait months to see a specialist. I spoke with others who had lost full-time jobs and have to get by now on short-term jobs with no benefits.

A freeway completely surrounds one section of the eastern part of my riding of LaSalle—Émard. The vehicular pollution has a direct effect on the health of these people. Vehicles are also a major source of greenhouse gases. I hope the budget will address the need to reduce greenhouse gases. Our health and our future are at stake.

Protecting the environment is a challenge but a promising one. It is a question of health and well-being. Our country is known for its vast territory and we need to recognize that more often and protect that territory. We have unparalleled wealth in our lakes and rivers. Unfortunately, this natural wealth is more and more often being exploited with no regard for the long-term implications.

That is why we need to immediately recognize that environmental protection and responsible economic growth are not incompatible. I hope to be able to count on the co-operation of all members in the House to adopt practical solutions that will bring real change.

Instead of handing over a blank cheque to large corporations, we propose investing in green technology in order to protect our environment for future generations. In addition, by investing in technologies of the future, we will be offering new opportunities and interesting, well-paying jobs to youth.

*The Budget**[English]*

Four and a half million Canadians voted New Democrat and they know exactly what they voted for. They voted to strengthen public pensions. They voted to improve public health care. They voted to help families make ends meet. They voted to grow our economy with new jobs and opportunities. They voted for concrete measures to protect the environment. They also voted for that stronger Canada with a proud place for Quebec.

● (1625)

[Translation]

The extraordinary team that is now the official opposition will be the voice of those Canadians who put their trust in us. The team is dynamic, unified and ready to work with others—that is guaranteed. We are here to serve the people. We will work to bring forward proposals that will meet the expectations and needs of our constituents, and that is what I want to promise to my constituents in LaSalle—Émard.

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's statements with respect to investment in green technology and economic diversification. She also spoke quite passionately about bringing forward projects that will be of interest and benefit to her constituents.

I have risen on this point a couple of times in the chamber earlier today, but I would just advise the member that in my riding of Charlottetown and in our province of Prince Edward Island, we are leaders in the generation of wind power. Our aspirations in that regard have been severely limited by the refusal of the government to fund a subsea cable to the mainland to allow us to sell that power to the Atlantic grid. It is a prime example of a green energy initiative and economic diversification, and it is something on which our province is being held back.

Would the member comment with respect to green energy and economic diversification for all provinces?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for giving me a very fine example of the green energy the opposition members would like to encourage. We have to ensure that these green energies are distributed where they should be and promote their development, whether in the Montreal area, where my riding is located, or elsewhere in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on being elected and on her comments today.

One of the reasons that Canadians gave the Conservative government a strong mandate in the election on May 2 was the fact that we are keeping taxes low. This morning one of my colleagues from across the way talked about a carbon tax, which is very disheartening. It is something that Canadians do not believe is effective and will penalize Canadians.

Why does my colleague want to increase taxes on Canadians?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, we would discourage giving tax credits to corporations and instead have them distributed better to all taxpayers. We must not favour one single sector.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard on her passionate speech. I know her remarkable character and I know that the people of LaSalle—Émard will be extremely well represented by her. I heard our Conservative colleague say:

● (1630)

[English]

"A strong mandate was given by Canadians."

Although I do not deny the fact that a majority of Conservatives were elected, 60% of the population did not vote Conservative.

[Translation]

That being said, the hon. member represents a riding where there are several pockets of poverty. In her opinion, what could the Conservatives do to improve life for the less fortunate in society? The homelessness partnering strategy has a strong presence in Montreal and in the Outaouais region. What can be done to help the less fortunate? Does helping them necessarily mean increasing taxes?

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question and thoughtful comments. The various programs that were mentioned do not necessarily mean tax increases. It is simply a matter of re-investing in certain sectors that have been neglected, especially social housing, which would be a great help. When people can find affordable housing, the financial burden on them is reduced and this helps them live a better life.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take advantage of this opportunity to thank the people of Rivière-du-Nord for their support in the last election. I will defend their interests every day.

Public finances must be sound, the budget must be balanced, the public debt must be reduced, government arrogance must be combated and controlled...

Where does this quote come from? From Marcus Tullius Cicero, in the year 55 BCE. The Conservatives have not invented a thing with their rhetoric.

This week in Saint-Jérôme, the Café de Rue SOS, a little storefront café that welcomed vagrants, people with various drug problems, the poor and the undocumented of this world, had to close its doors. It was not because people were not eager to go there and get their only meal of the day. No, it was because its grant dried up and there is nothing for it in this budget. There is nothing to increase assistance for the homeless. They are forgotten. For this government, they do not exist.

While the business world, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Conseil du patronat, were happy this week with the government's budget, those who have been overlooked were left to nurse their hunger, and they are very hungry. They can be certain now of sinking a little further into poverty and exclusion every day. There is nothing in this budget for them.

This government's whole approach to the budget is based on an illusion so cleverly maintained and so often repeated that it assumes the allure of truth. The illusion is that by reducing taxes on big business and becoming, as Minister Flaherty promised, the G8 country where companies pay the least tax—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. It is the practice in the House that we do not use the names of members.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance promised to make Canada the G8 country with the lowest corporate tax rates. That was supposed to lead to incredible wealth and more jobs, and this wealth was to be enjoyed by everyone. I am sorry to challenge this claim, but the reality is totally the opposite.

On April 6, an article in the *Globe and Mail*, based on data from Statistics Canada, demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that companies have not used the tax cuts to create jobs or to improve conditions for workers. And they have not invested in better machinery to make their companies more competitive, either. No, they have not. In fact, for two decades, companies have continued to invest between 10% and 13% in machinery. Tax cuts have not improved our ability to compete.

The numbers tell us that the tax cuts were essentially spent on bonuses for the companies' top executives and used to inflate the available cash flow. For what? For hedge funds. These are the same hedge funds that caused the 2008 financial crisis. They are in the process of creating another crisis for us, another bubble that will burst in our faces. In reality, the money that has been handed over to the corporations in the form of tax cuts since 2005 has not been invested in our collective wealth. Yes, wealth has been created, but only for Canada's privileged few.

Meanwhile, public services are deteriorating. The government is telling us that it does not have the money to fund them better and that, on the contrary, it needs to make more cuts. The government is announcing \$17 billion in cuts. Bravo. The Conservative government says that it is very proud of Canada's economic action plan. I am ashamed of it. It does not include anything for unemployed workers or homeless people and it does not contain any measures for social housing. Quebec alone has a shortage of 50,000 social housing units. I did not see any measures in the budget to address this issue.

People who are living in poverty desperately need this social housing. What are we going to do? The government is proposing to do nothing. Ordinary people are struggling to make ends meet and the government is proud of abandoning part of the population to its fate. I saw that the hon. Minister of Finance was proud of his budget and that he abandoned people to their fate. Bravo. However, ordinary people are having trouble making ends meet.

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I would like to remind the House that in 2006 and 2008, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights admonished Canada twice for its lack of effort to combat persistent poverty, and I quote:

...the minimum wages in all Provinces and Territories of the State party are below the Low Income Cut Off and are insufficient to enable workers and their families to enjoy a decent standard of living.

There is nothing there.

We are wondering mainly about the persistent waiting lists for social housing, which are still very long, particularly in the Montreal area. The number of food banks in this area, as well as in my own riding, is increasing. In Canada, 2.3 million people are affected by food insecurity. They are hungry. What are we going to do for them? Nothing is planned. In Quebec alone, 300,000 people are going to food banks each month. What is planned to help them? Nothing. That is the reality in Canada. It is also the reality in Quebec and in the Rivière-du-Nord riding. It is the result of government policies, those of the Liberal and Conservative governments that have been in power over the past 15 years. This has not changed. Rather than supporting our people by improving social policies, the Conservative government is completely abandoning the notion of social justice.

When I return to my riding this week, how could I explain to my 81-year-old mother that I voted for a budget that gives her an extra \$1.68 per day to pay her bills? I cannot vote for that because it is unbelievable. We are talking about \$1.68 to pay for hydro, food, gas and medication. I would be ashamed to vote in favour of this budget. It is simply disgraceful and disrespectful of the reality facing my mother and other seniors across Canada.

● (1635)

For these reasons, I will not vote in favour of this deceitful budget. The hon. members of the government should redo their homework and make amends to the poor. They forgot the poor. They have forgotten them.

This budget was written behind the closed doors of the major banks. The Minister of Finance and the corporate bigwigs wrote a budget. Bravo. Next time, I encourage the Minister of Finance to take to the streets, to come to Café de Rue SOS—if we can manage to save it—to write the budget with the homeless, people without documentation, the injured and people who have problems. We will sit down together and come up with a social justice budget instead of a plan to make the rich richer.

● (1640)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to welcome our new colleague.

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He is somewhat mistaken. I know he was not here in the previous parliamentary session. We presented a good economic action plan for Canada, which allocated large sums of money to stimulate the economy, because of the global crisis, and which gave hundreds of millions of dollars for social housing and hundreds of millions of dollars for poor people and the homeless. I know he missed all that, but I am telling him now, to bring him up to date. Furthermore, it continues to this day, since these developments and the construction of many housing units are still under way.

I would like to read the member a quote and I wonder if he could tell me what he thinks of this situation. I am quoting the FADOQ network:

...the FADOQ network notes that the many actions it has taken and the repeated pressure it has put on elected officials for the past several years in order to increase awareness about the problems facing the most vulnerable seniors are beginning to produce results...After more than a year of constant advocating to improve and simplify the guaranteed income supplement...the network...is pleased to see that today's federal budget contains some of the improvements it demanded.

Clearly, it is satisfied with our budget. What does the member have to say to that?

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, can the hon. member tell me what our seniors are supposed to do with \$1.68 more a day? Is that enough to make up for the increased cost of heating, electricity, basic food items and gas? What could anyone do with an extra \$1.68 a day these days? Buy half a loaf of bread or half a litre of milk? Would the member like me to go tell my mother that she is giving her \$1.68 a day? Does she really consider this enough of an improvement?

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the course of campaigning in my riding, I cannot tell the member the number of times that I would knock on the door of a senior and the comment I would hear was, "Everything is going up except my cheque".

It seems to me that the incentives that are targeted toward seniors are very specific and yet the problem is much more widespread. I would ask my colleague to comment on that, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, there is the problem of income for seniors, and there are the problems of essential services, such as health care and home care services. Seniors simply do not have all the support that a government or a society should be giving them. Massive cuts were made under the Liberals, particularly to health care funding. The huge federal deficit was offloaded onto the provinces. Then, that deficit was offloaded onto the hospitals. Now, our hospitals are in debt. A 16-hour wait in an emergency room is a long time for a senior. I think that the whole philosophy needs to change. We need to look for financial resources where they exist. Now, they are being used for speculation on the economy, which is plunging us into successive crises. We must use these margins and redistribute wealth in Canada, so that Canadians have access to free, high-quality services and so that these services are not abolished. That would benefit society as a whole, not just one small group.

• (1645)

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time standing in the House, I would like to thank the electors of Eglinton—Lawrence for their confidence in electing me as their member of Parliament. Eglinton—Lawrence is a wonderfully diverse riding in the heart of Toronto and a riding that had not elected a Conservative member before. During the next four years, I will represent the interests and reflect the values of all the residents of the riding to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

It is fitting that my first address to this chamber is on a topic of great personal interest: fiscal policy and the economy of the country. My career has been devoted to capital markets and securities regulation which provides the relevant perspective both to my role as a member of Parliament and minister of the Crown.

These last years have been a difficult time for Canadians across the country. Jobs have been lost, savings have been depleted and families have had to put off their dreams for a well-earned retirement.

While the global recession did not begin in Canada, Canadians and the people around the world were reminded that we are indeed not an island. What happens in neighbouring countries and distant lands can have a profound effect on our local communities, especially for a great trading country like Canada. This is true now more than ever.

What began as a credit collapse in the United States' housing market quickly grew to an international financial crisis, a deep global recession and a debt crisis in sovereign governments in Europe.

While Canada was not immune, we remained strong while others floundered. The recession began later, cut less deeply and ended sooner in Canada. This was the result of many factors, including the prudent regulation of our banking system, the resilience of our businesses, the resourcefulness of our people and the strong action of our government.

These actions protected our economy by means of one of the larger stimulus programs in the world. Canada's economic action plan invested in our communities with historic infrastructure investments, invested in our people with targeted tax cuts and invested in our most vulnerable with improvements in EI. And it yielded results.

[Translation]

Throughout the recession, Canada fared better than the other G7 countries. The number of Canadians who are employed has increased by nearly 540,000 since July 2009. The economy is growing again, our banks are solid and investment is on the rise.

[English]

However, we are not out of the woods. We must continue to focus on the economy and our long-term financial future. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will provide a framework for the future of Canada's economy, ensuring jobs that are created and growth that continues.

I would like to now focus on how budget 2011 relates to my new portfolio, natural resources.

In a few weeks on the job, my life has consisted of briefings, meetings, announcements, events, planes, trains and automobiles. While hectic, it has also been the start of what is promising to be one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my life.

Budget 2011 builds on the great work of my predecessors at Natural Resources Canada. Under the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we are supporting Canada's leadership in developing and promoting clean energy technologies.

[Translation]

As part of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we are supporting Canada's leadership in developing and promoting clean energy technologies. Since 2006, our government has invested roughly \$10 billion in clean energy development and green job creation. One of the biggest successes of the past few years has been our eco-energy retrofit-homes program.

Since 2007, this successful initiative has allowed Canadians to benefit from grants to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. It is also an essential economic stimulus for communities across Canada. To date, our government has invested \$745 million in this program, allowing for energy efficiency retrofits to half a million Canadian homes.

In the new budget, we are investing \$400 million to extend the eco-energy retrofit-homes program in the current fiscal year, which will give Canadian families more time to take advantage of the grants of up to \$5,000 to offset the cost of improving the energy efficiency of their homes.

• (1650)

[English]

Let me now turn to another pillar of the Canadian economy, the forestry sector. I want to assure the House that we are standing behind workers who depend on the forestry industry in hundreds of Canadian communities.

[Translation]

I want to assure hon. members that we support workers who depend on the forestry industry in hundreds of Canadian communities.

[English]

Even at the best of times, these hard-working men and women face many challenges. Now, during the ongoing global difficulties, these challenges are that much greater. We must diversify our markets to ensure the ongoing success of our forestry sector.

In 2010, the IMF projected that advanced economies would grow under 3%, while emerging economies were expected to grow by

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over 7%. That is why our government is focusing on expanding our free trade network and creating links to developing countries around the world, and we are getting results. Since forming the government, we have seen a 600% increase in softwood lumber exports to China. It is an amazing success story that budget 2011 is building on.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan invests \$60 million to help forestry companies innovate and tap into new opportunities abroad.

Canada's economic action plan has invested \$170 million over two years to transform the forestry industry and improve its long-term competitiveness.

[Translation]

This builds on the significant support provided by the government to help the forestry sector in making the transition toward higher-value activities and expanding to new markets. This includes \$1 billion for the pulp and paper green transformation program in order to support capital projects in the forestry sector that offer clear benefits to the environment.

[English]

These measures will help address the challenges facing the forestry sector and the workers and communities who depend on it. We will continue to implement measures that sharpen Canada's competitiveness, productivity and capacity for innovation.

These are just two of the important initiatives taken to strengthen our energy sector and our natural resource sector. There is much more in the budget, including significant funds to support clean and sustainable energy.

It is the right budget for families, the right budget for our resource sector, the right budget for Canadians. All members of the House should stand up and support this budget.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the member opposite for his historic victory.

My question is about the support the government is willing to give seniors.

In my riding of Davenport, I spent many months, in fact over a year, knocking on doors and listening to seniors every day who called this plan an insult at less than two dollars a day. When we talk about a \$600 increase for seniors, it is not \$600 a week or a month, but \$600 a year or less than two dollars a day.

The member opposite from Toronto knows how much one can buy with less than two dollars. How can less than two dollars a day lift any senior out of poverty?

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● (1655)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised that the member opposite, having voted against the budget, is on the side that he purports to be.

Our Conservative government recognizes that Canada's seniors help build and make our country great. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan introduces new measures to improve the quality of life of, and expand the opportunities for, Canadian seniors. It includes increasing the guaranteed income supplement for seniors by \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, thereby helping more than 680,000 seniors across the country; enhancing the new horizons for seniors program; extending the targeted initiative for older workers; eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees; and extending the eco-energy retrofit program, which I referred to earlier.

These measures build on the over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief our government has provided to seniors and pensioners since 2006, including removing over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls, introducing pension income splitting, increasing the age credit amount, doubling the pension income credit and increasing the guaranteed income supplement.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the minister not only for his election but also for his appointment to an important role in cabinet. I definitely think it is good for Canada when a person of his experience and knowledge decides to enter into public service.

The member said he would represent the values of his constituents. My question is not about a multi-million dollar item but a question of values, because one item in the budget did offend me.

For those with children taking music lessons, for example, there is a tax credit worth \$75 per child. However, parents only receive that credit if they have enough money to be paying income tax. There are about nine million Canadians who do not pay income tax. It turns out that a single mother earning \$20,000 would not benefit from this \$75, whereas children of better off parents would.

How does this reflect the values of your constituents, Mr. Minister, to have such a program where only the well-off children get benefits for music lessons but not the poorer ones?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his kind remarks and affirmation of my credentials for my new responsibilities.

This government has introduced measures that benefit the average family by \$3,500. Not every measure will benefit every category. The member opposite had a distinguished career as an economist in a large chartered bank and would know there are a variety of measures.

Overall, we have done a great deal for Canadians in every field. Growing the economy is the way to benefit Canadians. I personally canvassed over 35,000 doors and I heard that message. It was a message that was reaffirmed on election day.

● (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I resume debate, I would just like to remind all hon. members to address their comments to the Chair. I know that for new members this is not always the natural thing to do, but it is required.

Second, if members could keep an eye on the Chair when speaking, we sometimes signal when a member's time is coming to an end. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see you in the chair today.

I would like to start by thanking the very smart voters of Elgin—Middlesex—London who re-elected me as their member of Parliament and by thanking the great team that made it possible, including my wife who has supported me through four elections, and the hardworking staff who help me with my vision of constituency service.

I am honoured to represent those people here in this place. I represent an area of Canada that has spectacular beauty, a place of incredible history, a place of tradition and family values. Elgin—Middlesex—London is exactly as the name suggests, a sum of different parts. It has 80 kilometres of Canada's southern coasts, including Lake Erie beaches and fishing ports, bluffs, incorporating Canada's early pioneer history.

Elgin—Middlesex—London is proud of its agricultural history and century old family farms and how it feeds Canada. Elgin—Middlesex—London is a mixture of small- and medium-size municipalities, groups of villages and towns with a proud heritage and hard-working people, including part of Canada's tenth largest city, London, with all the cultural diversity and big city offerings of university, colleges, exciting sports teams and a mix of commerce and manufacturing.

Elgin—Middlesex—London also includes St. Thomas, Ontario, a fun-sized city that has its own small town volunteerism and family friendly atmosphere. Elgin—Middlesex—London also embraces the Middlesex portion, the thriving municipality of Thames Centre and more great agricultural production by great farming families.

As members will realize, this riding is a snapshot of just about all things Canadian: hardworking families; manufacturing, big, small, and medium; post-secondary education; seniors and veterans; agricultural producers, though back home it is still okay to call them farmers; big and medium cities and small villages; and even commercial fishing; and proud Canadians who work hard and believe in democracy, the rule of law and who want a good life for their families.

Now that I have shared with members where I am from, let me share why this budget brings Elgin—Middlesex—London something for all, sharing the bounty that is Canada for those who work hard every day to make it that way.

Let us first start with what this budget brings for families. I cannot start with what the budget brings without saying what has already been done for families over the five years of this government. Let us talk about cutting taxes 120 times since forming government. Let us talk about cutting the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. Let us talk about removing a million Canadians from the tax rolls. Let us talk about increasing the amount Canadians can earn tax-free. Let us talk about reducing the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, and putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pocket of every Canadian family.

We introduced the universal child tax benefit, offering families more choice in child care by providing \$1,200 a year. I could go on and I think I will.

We introduced the child tax credit. We introduced the child fitness tax credit. Later on, I will tell the House about another new child tax credit. We brought in the landmark tax-free savings account, the best and newest way to save money since the RRSP. We eliminated the marriage penalty for one-earner families. We introduced the registered disability savings plan. We introduced a first-time homebuyer's tax credit and expanded it.

Due to the strong work of this government over its first five years, we have a strong record of tax relief that includes total savings for a typical family of over \$3,000. That is what we did before this budget.

Let us talk about what we did in this one. There is a new child arts tax credit, which one of the members just mentioned. There is a new family caregiver tax credit. There is an enhanced medical expenses tax credit, as we removed the \$10,000 limit on this credit. We are extending the eco-energy retrofit program so that people can make their homes more energy efficient, therefore saving themselves money. We are helping students in a number of ways, allowing them to earn more money towards an exemption on their loans.

It is incredible what we have been able to do for families. I wish I had time just to talk about families, but I am going to switch to business.

What have we done for small business? Again, I will not start with what is in this budget. Let us start with what we have already done, what we have been able to accomplish in our first five years of government.

We have increased the small business limit to \$500,000. The amount of money small businesses can earn has grown so that small businesses can actually become bigger while still paying small business tax rates.

● (17:05)

We reduced the small business tax rate, speaking of that, from 12% to 11%, making small businesses more successful. What do we have in this budget for small businesses? There is a new hiring tax credit for small business, a temporary one-time credit using money that would be submitted to the government for EI. People can use it to hire new people and expand employment in this country.

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Reducing red tape is something I have heard a lot. As a small businessman myself, when knocking on the doors of businesses during this last campaign I heard a lot about red tape and how much time it takes for businesses just to comply with all the regulations at the different levels of government. We will reduce that. We have put together a commission and we have already started our work.

Supporting youth entrepreneurs is in this budget. As a person who started my own business when I was in my teens, I understand what this is like. That was a few years ago. We put \$10 million in additional support toward youth entrepreneurs, young people who want to reach out and grab the bounty that Canada has, operate their own businesses and, yes, in time employ other Canadians and increase employment.

We extended the accelerated capital cost allowance. It will help manufacturers and businesses purchase the equipment they need to make their businesses more efficient and profitable and, therefore, be able to expand their businesses, hire more people and, as a result, create more jobs. That is for small businesses. There is more but I do not have time for all of it. I am going to go on to big businesses now.

An hon. member: Do your best.

Mr. Joe Preston: Yes, I will do my best.

We have lowered taxes for all businesses. We introduced the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance that I already talked about, giving businesses the ability to buy better, newer and faster equipment to make their businesses run better. Over the past five years, we have eliminated the cost-killing corporate surtax. We also have helped provinces get rid of their capital taxes.

We have enhanced scientific research and development. During the previous five years that we were in government we visited a lot of universities, colleges and businesses that have really been able to capitalize and commercialize on the research and development opportunities we offered to them. I have already mentioned that we have extended the accelerated capital cost allowance again in this budget. Speaking about this budget, this is where we are at.

Supporting seniors has been mentioned a lot today, as well as increasing the GIS, enhancing the new horizons program, extending the targeted initiative for older workers, eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally-regulated employees and we have already talked about extending the eco-energy program to help make homes more energy efficient and save people money. These are the things that we have been able to do.

Today I have discussed an area of Canada that I represent and the positive differences within it. I have talked about some of the positive steps in budget 2011 and how they will make Elgin—Middlesex—London a better place, indeed make Canada a better place.

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I just spent 35 days touring my riding, though I forget what caused that. I had discussions with Canadians and constituents and I found some people who have a fairly negative outlook on Canada as a country. I am here to say that I do not and the great people of Elgin—Middlesex—London think Canada is the best place on the face of this earth. What we have been able to provide them in this budget makes it just a bit better.

Collectively we are reminded often that Canada is the best place to live and we should celebrate that. Canada is looking good.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London to imagine with us, to dream with us, just how much better Canada could be if the Conservatives had applied some of the rhetoric that they espouse now post-budget into the actual document.

I would remind my colleague that the sum total of all of the social spending and the goodies, of which there were crumbs from the table that fell into much needed social spending, pales in comparison to the gargantuan \$6 billion corporate tax cuts that the government is allowing to go through uninterrupted even though both of the opposition parties have been urging it to reconsider this.

The NDP is not against a tax cut for small business. I would ask my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London if he knows what the small business tax is in the socialist paradise of Manitoba? When the NDP took power in Manitoba in 1999, the small business tax was 11%, but incrementally over 10 years we have put it down from 11% to 10% to 9% to 8% to 7% to 6%. Guess what it is now? It is a big fat goose egg, zero.

My colleague should not say that we are against tax cuts for small business or that we are the tax and spend party. When we have the chance we actually give small businesses a break on their taxes but we are vehemently opposed to the largest corporate giveaway since the CP Railroad and this wheelbarrow full of cash the Conservatives are dumping into corporate Canada for no appreciable benefit and for no good reason with no strings attached.

● (1710)

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, my Winnipeg friend and I have had a few of these discussions over time and I appreciate his comments today.

He was right. I was about to get up and say he had never met a tax he did not like to hike but apparently he has found one, so there is one he does not like to hike. That may be the only one in his repertoire so I am pretty happy to suggest that he still has not met many taxes he does not like to hike and has never met spending he did not like to increase.

As I shared in my debate, the wise people of Elgin—Middlesex—London have chosen a Conservative government with a better plan.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the eco-energy retrofit program. That program was put in place by the previous Liberal government, was cancelled by the Conservative government and on the eve of the election it brought it back for a year. These types of programs, when they are put in place for a short period like a year, do not provide the same kind of stability for small businesses involved in green renovation than a longer term approach would provide.

A company called Sustainable Housing in my riding had 50 employees when the Liberal program was in place. That number went down to about 16 employees when the program was cancelled. The company is now seeing this new program for the next year and there is a lot of uncertainty as to whether or not it really can expand and give people job security as it does so.

Would my colleague agree that it would make more sense to extend this program for four or five years because these are major decisions that homeowners have to make and major decisions for small businesses that are expanding into the green jobs of tomorrow, in this case green renovations?

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for Kings—Hants back to the House. I was going to say it is nice to see him, but I almost cannot from here.

● (1715)

Hon. Scott Brison: I can see you Joe.

Mr. Joe Preston: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but it sounded like heckling and I have been ruling all of that out. I sit too close to you sir to be able to do it. You would certainly catch it.

The member for Kings—Hants and members of his party love to get up and talk about the one or two or three good things that his party once did when it was in power. If we had given my colleague long enough, he would have risen and told us what he was just about to get done. That was the next thing.

The eco-energy program has been a very good program across Canada. The secret to these programs is that they cannot be there forever or people will just keep putting off the changes that they need to make to their homes. We need to have them so that they can be refreshed from time to time and ideas can be made better and that is what this government has done.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Mount Royal.

In some sense, one could say that I only have three problems with this budget, which I would like to address. First of all, it makes the wrong choices. Second, it really is very weak on accountability. Third, it attempts to balance the books on the backs of the most vulnerable in society. Other than that, I suppose we could say it is okay. I would say those are three rather important points.

[Translation]

The budget makes the wrong choices. It lacks accountability, and the government is trying to balance its budget on the backs of society's most vulnerable.

I want to start by talking about wrong choices. The worst choice is probably the tax cuts for large corporations, which will cost the government \$6 billion a year.

[English]

It is not the only bad choice. There are the untended fighter jets. There is the billions on prisons. However, this is \$6 billion per year, which is a big chunk of the money available.

We think prosperity, growth, innovation and productivity are crucial, but we do not think the best way to do that is through reducing tax on the largest companies. We think it is better to either reduce the taxes on the smaller businesses or to have incentives to invest, like a five-year period for accelerated capital cost allowance or to have incentives like a flow-through shared type of mechanism to encourage investment in green technology and high tech industries. Those are just examples which we think are much more cost efficient and cost effective in raising productivity and promoting growth, innovation and jobs than the measure the government took.

However, the net effect of this decision to proceed with tax cuts to the largest corporations is that it puts families at the back of the line. Either the families get a pittance or they have to wait who knows how many years until the books are balanced. We think since families are struggling to make ends meet, families should be at the front rather than at the back of the line, which is where they are in this budget.

Let me give a few examples. In certain cases, families get something but it is a pittance. The government spends \$34 million to help students. There are about a million students in Canada, so that is \$34 per student per year. It makes no difference. The government spends money to help caregivers, but the maximum credit is \$300. That is not going to be a material help for a caregiver looking after his or her loved ones.

Then there are some more major measures, such as the income-splitting measure, but that comes to nothing until the books are balanced. The government claims that is after three years, four years or who knows how many years.

My point is that by doing these tax cuts for very large corporations, the government leaves families out. This is not the most effective way to stimulate growth and jobs and it has the consequence that either families get a pittance now or a bit more down the road. We think that is the wrong approach.

The second point is the lack of fiscal accountability. When we were government in 2005, we did find \$11 billion over five years in savings and we booked every item in the budget, so Canadians were clear on exactly what item was being cut or saved, where it would come from and what was going to happen as a consequence of these cuts.

The problem with this budget is that Canadians do not have a clue as to where those cuts will come from. Whose ox will be gored? We know a little bit coming out. There will be lots of cuts in Newfoundland on fisheries where a bit is coming out, but there is very little information in the budget knowing which services will be cut and which people will lose their jobs.

Instead, we get what I would call weasel words. For example, we are told that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development will have savings on the order of \$500 million. That is interesting. What cuts will it get for \$500 million? Here is the

The Budget

answer, taken straight from the budget. This is what the Conservatives are going to do: "Improve alignment of program funding with actual needs; Find efficiencies through improved procurement processes and use of technology; Improve use of internal resources and administrative efficiency; Align program activities with core mandate".

This is a good one: "Refocus programming to benefit all Canadians".

That is just gobbledygook. Those are weasel words. That does not tell Canadians anything at all about who is going to pay for these cuts, what services are going to be cut and who is going to lose their jobs. All we get are these weasel words and that is why I say the budget is lacking in accountability.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Third, the government is trying to balance its budget on the backs of society's most vulnerable, both in Canada and around the world. Last year's budget froze CIDA funding that included money for economic development in other parts of the world. In that budget, a quarter of the savings put towards reducing the deficit came from freezing international development funding.

[English]

In other words, a quarter from the previous year's budget of all the savings that were found were found by restraining CIDA funding. One quarter of the savings to balance Canada's books came on the backs of the poorest people in the world who received cuts in their development assistance.

I would mark the contrast between the Canadian Conservative government that got savings on the backs of the poorest people in the world and the British Conservative government that made an exemption for only two areas which were not debt cuts. The two areas that were not debt cuts were national health and international development. So, whereas the British Conservative government singled out development assistance for especially preferential treatment, the Canadian government singled out international development assistance for especially negative treatment. I think that is a prime example of balancing the books on the backs of the poorest people in the world.

This inclination to hurt the most vulnerable does not just go abroad. It is also true at home.

We heard today, in the supplementary estimates (A), that some of the money for affordable housing was being put back. However, do members know what was the one area where the cut of about \$120 million was not put back at all? Housing on reserves. There is probably the area of greatest need in this country.

The Conservatives cut the money for reserves, they cut international development assistance, they provide firefighters and caregivers and music lesson goes with tax credits, but those tax credits are worth nothing if people's income is low enough that they do not pay income tax.

*The Budget**[Translation]*

To conclude, the Conservatives are making the wrong choices in this budget, they are weak on accountability and they are trying to balance the budget on the backs of society's most vulnerable, both here in Canada and abroad.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for being re-elected and for being able to avoid the NDP wave, obviously.

I was actually quite shocked when I listened to my colleague speak about what has been done for families under the Conservative government.

Under the Liberal government, social programs were slashed, funding for provinces for health care was slashed, and every program that Canadian families used was slashed. It had such a negative effect on Canadian families. Certainly, it was something that as a Conservative government we said we would not do.

Instead, what did we do? We cut the GST. We gave families the child care benefit. That was something the Liberals would never have dreamed of doing. We are doing things for families like the sports tax credit and the arts tax credit, things that families are asking for.

I want to ask my hon. colleague, when will the Liberals get in touch with Canadians today? The problem is they are very much out of touch with Canadian values. Instead of seeing what Canadians need, they are again criticizing what this government has done.

• (1725)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend across the aisle for her positive comments about my re-election and the NDP wave, which I somehow managed to survive. I congratulate her as well for her re-election.

However, I take some exception to these remarks about Liberals cutting transfers to provinces, et cetera. She is talking about 16 years ago, in 1995. I would point out that this action was taken, and I would not subscribe to her definition of it, but there were severe cutbacks, she is right about that, because the Liberals of the day inherited a super huge \$42 billion Conservative deficit. We were on the brink of a fiscal crisis.

The most important point is, and the finance minister should listen to this, what were the finance minister's colleagues of the day, the Conservative Party and the Reform Party, in the mid-1990s saying to the Liberal government? They were saying, "Cut more. You're not cutting enough". And now they turn around and say that we cut too much. They cannot have it both ways. They said, at the time, "You're not cutting nearly enough". I remember those days very well.

[Translation]

Ms. Francoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also thank the two members who just spoke for their reference to the orange wave. Indeed, I am very pleased that the hon. member was re-elected. Despite everything, I have had some good discussions with him over the years.

Personally, I think both members are wrong. We are once again going through what happened in 1995. For instance, in Gatineau we have our share of problems in health care. We have not recovered from those cuts. No one in Quebec will say otherwise. Whether we blame the Conservatives or not for eliminating the deficit on the backs of the provinces, through cuts to vital programs like health care and education, the fact remains that we are still feeling the repercussions.

Drastic cuts have been made to the public service here in this region, even though it is the driving force of our economy. No one says that often enough. It hurt, and it continues to hurt. People are even more afraid to see what the Conservatives will cut next after all the reviews.

I agree with the member's comment that we do not know where the next cuts will be. Furthermore, that is perhaps the only difference I see in the two versions of the budget. They adopted the slower approach of a one-year review. In a year's time, they will hit us hard.

Does the hon. member think that the 1995 cuts are no longer being felt?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the 1995 cuts were necessary because of the \$42 billion deficit we had inherited from the Conservatives. However, it took maybe three years to balance the budget. After that, we re-invested in the economy and were able to sign the health agreement with the provinces that was in effect from 2004 to 2014. The Conservatives are trying to take credit for it, but that was a Liberal plan, a 10-year plan with a 6% per year increase in health transfers. That was after we returned to a balanced budget. We had the money to make these investments in health, education and social programs.

[English]

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Mount Royal, that wonderful, diverse and engaged constituency that I am honoured and privileged to represent.

I begin by expressing my appreciation to the electors of Mount Royal who have entrusted me with my sixth mandate in 11 years, as I was first elected in a byelection in 1999, and for their continuing engagement and involvement in the issues of the day.

In particular, I want to commend my constituents for their participation in pre-budgetary public forums. These encounters both inform and inspire my remarks today.

For example, at the invitation of the Minister of Finance, who recommended that such consultations be held, we held a pre-budgetary forum in my riding on February 10 in the presence of a cross-section of some 300 people from the riding. On March 4, I forwarded a summary of the issues discussed, concerns expressed, and recommendations to the minister. On March 17, in the light of emerging concerns, we held yet another public forum.

On March 22, the Minister of Finance tabled the budget in the House and on March 24, I spoke in the House with respect to that budget by way of reply. Indeed, the government's economic action plan and the budget, as an expression of that action plan, formed part of the discussion in my electoral encounters during the election.

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Accordingly, and as the minister said in presenting the government's post-election budget and the government's action plan on June 6, all done against the backdrop of the Speech from the Throne, the minister would be continuing where he left off or, more particularly, reaffirming what he said on March 22. As he put it earlier this afternoon, and I quote, "We like this budget so much we introduced it twice".

Similarly, as my initial critique anchored in the representations of my constituents of the time went seemingly unaddressed and unacknowledged by the minister who invited these pre-budget consultations, I thought it appropriate to reaffirm and refine those responses in my remarks today.

I begin as I did on March 24 by reaffirming that the budget is not just a financial statement or economic action plan, it is a statement of values. Against the backdrop of the Speech from the Throne, it in effect constitutes the government's vision for the future. It is not only a balance sheet, but as the minister himself acknowledged in his initial presentation on March 22, it is a statement of priorities, a balance of needs, indeed, a statement of principles and priorities underpinning such a vision.

Accordingly, I organize my remarks around two things.

First, I will seek to summarize the four major critiques of the government's action plan as conveyed to me by my constituents in the various public forums that we had, including pre-budget consultations.

Second, I will refer to the government's underlying vision, or the absence of an overall strategic vision, as again conveyed to me by my constituents.

In the matter of the critique as conveyed by my constituents, the first concern is the \$30 billion for an untendered contract for the purchase of F-35 jets. It is a matter of interest to note that at the pre-budget consultation we held on February 10 I shared with my constituency the proposed or anticipated cost at the time, which was \$16 billion. I then said that I thought it was higher, probably \$21 billion.

By the time we held the next consultation on March 17, we learned from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that, after conducting an international peer review, the estimated cost was now \$30 billion. Indeed, we learned during the election that even the \$30 billion may already be outdated.

The cost, as attested to by United States senators and congressmen themselves, was "out of control". Some countries like Denmark and the Netherlands were rethinking their commitment. There were those in the U.S. who were calling for the scrapping of the F-35 project as a whole.

The issue is not whether we need fighter jets. We have respect for the security needs of this country. The question is whether we should be spending \$30 billion, and rising, on an untendered contract. Even the Americans say the costs are out of control and an international peer review suggests that we need an open competitive contract with respect to this particular budgetary item.

• (1730)

Second, there was an extended critique by my constituents of the billions of dollars set aside for a crime agenda and for the building of megaprisons at a time when crime is declining. I have to say, as a former minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, that the government clearly has a responsibility to address the question of crime. Governments clearly have a responsibility for the safety and security of the streets and neighbourhoods of their inhabitants.

As I learned as a minister of justice, let alone in my previous involvement as a law professor in areas of criminal justice *sur le terrain*, one of the best ways to combat crime is to prevent it to begin with, to provide jobs for youth at risk rather than jails, to utilize an integrated, preventive and rehabilitative approach rather than one organized around over-criminalization, over-sentencing, megaprisons and extended punishments.

Third, my constituents critiqued the \$6 billion of proposed corporate tax cuts for the richest 5% of corporations. I am not opposed to corporate tax cuts as a matter of principle or as a matter of rigid orthodoxy. I can appreciate that corporate tax cuts can relate to economic growth and increased employment. Indeed, I was part of a government and sat in a cabinet that reduced corporate taxes from 29% to 21%.

I am not saying that we should never reduce corporate taxes. I understand, as I said, their validity. However, we did it at a time when we had eight successive budgetary surpluses. We did it at a time when we bequeathed to the Conservatives, when we were defeated, a budgetary surplus of \$13.2 billion. We did not do it at a time when there was, as there is now, the highest budgetary deficit of \$56 billion and we did not do it with respect to the very richest 5% of corporations while those in need were in fact given paltry handouts. That is the point of principle.

I will borrow from the Minister of Finance's own statement when he said, "What are the relative needs? What is the basis of comparative need?" I put the question to my constituents in our prebudget consultations. Their response in terms of the minister's own principle was that this budget spends 1,000 times more on fighter jets than it does on post-secondary students, 1,000 times more on megaprisons than it does on youth crime prevention, more for a single day of the G20 than in a year for seniors who are being given a paltry sum of \$1.20 a day, more in partisan advertising than it did on family care, and so on.

The final critique is that the Conservative government has expressly excluded low income Canadians from qualifying for measures under this budget, such as the family caregiver tax credit, a worthy measure but one that is inappropriately being implemented. In a word, the Conservatives have made the tax credits in this budget non-refundable, which only helps Canadians who earn enough income so that they can pay the income taxes. Indeed, those are non-refundable tax credits and are not even available to low income Canadians. Simply put, under the Conservative government, a taxpayer earning \$20,000 with a dependant would not qualify for any help as a caregiver, and this is something that we sorely need.

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Finally, on the matter of a vision for the future and of having a strategic plan for the future, my constituents shared with me what they considered to be the absence of such a vision or strategic plan. They spoke of the importance of the need for health care. Indeed, I tabled, at their insistence, a nine point action plan for health care. They spoke of the need for early learning and child care and the need for access to higher education and to justice.

They spoke of the concerns of seniors, a disproportionate number of whom inhabit my riding. They spoke of pensions and poverty and of the fact that 700,000 seniors in this country are living in poverty. They spoke of the need for a clean environment and the need to invest in green technology. They spoke of the need for jobs, social housing, social justice and always that the test of a just society is how it treats its most vulnerable.

What do we find when we look at this budget? We find, regrettably, a budget that is disconnected from the needs that I have just shared with the House as my constituents conveyed them to me. We find a budget without a comprehensive strategy for health care, environmental protection, early learning and child care, jobs and taking care of the poor.

• (1735)

It is a budget, in a word, that is disconnected, not only from the needs of my own constituents as they shared them with me, but from the needs of many Canadians across this country who have conveyed similar views.

• (1740)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by very sincerely congratulating my colleague on his re-election. It is good to see him in the House.

One of the parts of the budget that has been very popular and very well supported in my riding is our ending of political subsidies. My hon. colleague has been involved in politics for a very long time. Would he not agree that it is actually healthier for a political party to raise funds on its own, to have policies that individual Canadians support and will actually back with their money? It be healthier for those parties because it would mean that they would need to be in touch with grassroots Canadians. There obviously is the tax implication and the fact that Canadians should not have to put money toward political parties that they do not support or agree with.

I am wondering what my colleague would have to say about that, given his experience in the political field, as well as seeing his party be successful and then not as successful in raising funds.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member opposite also on her re-election and her presence and participation in this House.

On the matter of subsidies and the like, the hon. member is correct that grassroots financing of political parties is important, and all political parties engage in it. However, the whole purpose of the subsidies has to be seen in accordance with the limitations that replace, on the one hand, financial contributions, and on democratization with respect to the financing of political parties, and to enhance political participation in the marketplace of ideas and in the marketplace of advocacy.

To the extent that some members of her party have spoken to it, and I am not saying that the hon. member spoke to it, but this kind of measure can put an end to the Liberal Party as we know it. In other words, we will not only defeat the Liberals but in fact the Liberals will be vanquished. Again, I am not attributing it to this House. I am just saying that the issue of political subsidization has to be seen within the context of maximizing political participation. That is how I look at it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Mount Royal for his victory and for withstanding the orange wave. That being said, I know that he was always very open to questions about the status of women when he was the justice minister.

The Minister of Finance will be very pleased to know that I am reading the budget; I am almost finished. I have only a few pages left to read and I did not see much about the status of women.

Did the hon. member read anything about the right to equality, for example, was there any additional funding allocated to the status of women in order to promote pay and other types of equity?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. I congratulate her on coming back to us and anticipate her participation in debates.

This budget and this plan barely touch on the principle of equality and the rights of women. The budget speaks about the anniversaries that will be happening in the coming year but it does not mention the fact that 2012 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is the 30th anniversary of the principle of equality. This is the same government that dismantled the court challenges program, which provided assistance to women and minorities and helped to meet the objectives of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my hon. colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings. I would like to congratulate him and all returning and new members who were elected on May 2.

I also thank the people of North Vancouver who, again, have given me the honour and privilege of representing them here in Ottawa.

I am pleased today to speak in favour of budget 2011 which introduces the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. Two years ago, Canada, along with the rest of the world, faced an extraordinary economic challenge. The great recession, as it has come to be known, threatened the jobs and the well-being of millions of Canadians and their families.

The Budget

To address this global crisis, our government acted swiftly and decisively by introducing Canada's economic action plan which included timely and targeted investments in transportation, colleges and universities, libraries, police and fire stations, affordable housing and recreational facilities, infrastructure and road improvements, and countless other important projects. The actions of our government helped to ensure that Canada was able to avoid the worst of the global economic recession and that we were able to enter into recovery faster than almost any other nation in the industrialized world.

It is with great pleasure that I am able to stand here today and say that Canada has posted the strongest employment growth in the G7 and that more Canadians are working today than before the start of the recession.

Although Canadians should be proud of the success, recent world events have shown there remains considerable risk and uncertainty in the global economy. The American and some European economies are suffering from a massive debt crisis, and although we in Canada are doing much better comparatively, there are still far too many Canadians who remain without jobs. It is with this mind that our government introduces the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It is a blueprint to the building of a better Canada, a Canada that is stronger, more stable and more prosperous. By remaining focused on our economy, our government seeks to stabilize our fragile economic recovery.

We will do this by investing in Canadians and their families. We will encourage private enterprise to invest and to create jobs. We will help Canadians get the education and training they need to work in the 21st century economy. We will assist Canadian families in the care and well-being of their loved ones.

The major priority of our government moving forward is to continue to facilitate the growth and creation of new jobs. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes multiple strategies to achieve this. We will be introducing a temporary hiring credit for small business, designed to encourage additional hiring by this vital sector. We will extend the work sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers. This will help provide older workers who wish to stay in the workforce the opportunity to do so.

We will support the manufacturing sector by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery.

Most important, we will stay on track to keep taxes low in order to encourage job creators to reinvest profits and create jobs and employment.

Another important aspect in protecting our fragile economic recovery is to continue to facilitate further access to international markets. This is why our government is committed to negotiating new free trade agreements which will further grow our economic capacity.

In addition to negotiating a free trade agreement with the European Union, the biggest economic bloc in the world, our government is aggressively pursuing better trade relations in the Asia-Pacific region. Increasing our market access in these vital

markets is a key component to growing our economy and creating new jobs.

Our government has invested millions into port improvements through the Asia-Pacific Gateway initiative. This, combined with an anticipated free trade agreement with India, one of the fastest growing economies in the world, will directly benefit the Canadian manufacturing industry and our resource sectors.

Due to our comparative advantages, Canada has a tremendous opportunity moving forward through the 21st century, and our government is making the necessary investments to take advantage of this.

However, creating economic opportunities and jobs is only one aspect of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. In order to have a truly competitive economy in the 21st century, it is imperative that we invest in the education and training of Canadians.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan contains multiple measures to do just that. We will be investing hundreds of millions of dollars for research and development at top ranked universities and educational facilities. We will extend tax relief for skills certification exams. This will make all occupational trade and professional exam fees eligible for tax relief.

● (1750)

We have committed to double the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week. This will directly benefit over 100,000 Canadian students by allowing them to work more without negatively affecting their loans.

Investing in the next generation of Canadian leaders will ensure that our country will continue to maintain the positive momentum we achieved through the important investments we have made over the past five years.

I can mention, for example, a project in my own riding of north Vancouver. Capilano University in my riding received, through the knowledge infrastructure program, \$15 million toward the building of a new film and animation centre. This state-of-the-art facility will help train thousands of students for careers in the film industry. It is through investments in the arts such as this that our government is not only strengthening our economy, but also our society as well as creating jobs and helping to train our next generation.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan introduces important measures to help Canadians take care of their families and their loved ones.

We have introduced a children's art's tax credit, a 15% non-refundable tax credit on up to \$500 in eligible fees for children's arts and cultural activities.

We have also introduced a family caregiver tax credit, a 15% non-refundable tax credit on an amount up to \$2,000 for Canadians to care for loved ones in need.

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We have also removed the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a financially-dependent relative.

Also, we have extended the eco-energy retrofit program. This will help families lower the cost of their heating and electricity bills.

In addition to helping Canadian families, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes unprecedented steps to aid Canadian seniors.

We have enhanced the guaranteed income supplement so that low income seniors will have additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will help more than 680,000 seniors and is the biggest increase of the GIS in over 25 years.

We have also enhanced the new horizons for seniors program. We are investing over \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors. The program will also move to protect seniors by raising the awareness of elder abuse.

Our government is also removing the mandatory retirement age for federally-regulated employees. This will give seniors the freedom to choose whether they wish to remain in the workforce.

On May 2, Canadians elected a Conservative majority government. During the campaign, our party promised to deliver on the priorities of everyday Canadians. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan delivers on this pledge.

As we move forward, our government will continue to lay the foundation for a stronger, more stable and more prosperous Canada.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Senator Smith said during the last election campaign and before his appointment to the other place, "it is "normal" that more of Ottawa's money should go to Conservative ridings".

Will the hon. member tell Canadians who elected opposition MPs that they will receive less federal funds because they did not vote for the Conservative Party?

Is this why the government will not commit to replacing the Champlain Bridge?

Is this why the township of Georgian Bay got \$1 million, and it was 86 kilometres away from Huntsville, for a linear park, but Rivière-Beaudette gets told that it will have to buy back its iconic historic lighthouse and assume costs for decontaminating the land that it is on?

That is the government for all Canadians? It presents itself as the government of all Canadians. Why was the equivalent of 4% of all funds directed toward infrastructure spending for the whole country spent in this small part of Ontario?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member were to look at the facts, he would see that every one of the 308 ridings across the country benefited from Canada's economic action plan. Every riding benefited from the stimulus fund.

Canadians across the country are applauding this government for the bold initiatives that we took to implement Canada's economic action plan and the results are there for everybody to see.

Infrastructure projects across the country that will benefit Canadians for generations to come have been built in the last two years as a result of Canada's economic action plan. These projects will increase productivity, increase manufacturing, increase fitness of people with renewed recreational facilities, new bridges, new sewers and new health facilities.

Every Canadian has benefited as a result of Canada's economic action plan.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): I want to congratulate you on your re-election, Mr. Speaker, as well as my hon. colleague on his re-election.

I want to thank the voters of Cardigan for finding a way to send me back here for the eighth time. It is indeed an honour to be in this place.

The government has indicated that it has done a number of things. It is going to spend \$30 billion on untendered contracts for airplanes. It is going to spend \$6 billion to give major corporations a break. It is going to spend billions of dollars on prisons. However, there are much smaller figures at which I hope the Minister of Finance and my hon. colleague will take a look.

The government took \$64 million out of ACOA last year and will take \$15 million out of ACOA this year. When the government takes \$57 million out of fisheries that becomes not only an economic issue but a safety issue. I hope my hon. colleague will not stand up and respond to me about how much his government has done.

We must convince my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance, of the importance of these issues before a fisherman loses his life because we could not find the funding to dredge the harbour.

• (1755)

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, there are many fine projects across the country that need funding from the federal government, and many of them have been funded.

The priorities of Canadians are clear. We will be focusing on economic growth and also on job creation with Canada's economic action plan. The best social program is a strong economy and that is why we will be focusing on a strong economy and creating jobs in the years to come.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to welcome my friend and colleague back to the House. It is a joy working with the parliamentary secretary.

I realize the parliamentary secretary has a very large family, has friends who have children and I want to give him an opportunity at this point to celebrate this budget by indicating which measures in the budget are going to help his family and the families of his friends as they progress through this wonderful time and through the summer.

I hope he will please take this opportunity to tell us what he thinks of the family measures in the budget.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on being re-elected and for also being reappointed a parliamentary secretary.

The Budget

As a result of reducing over 120 taxes over the last five years since the Conservative government came to power, the average Canadian family has over \$3,000 extra in its pocket at the end of each year. That is \$3,000 that it can spend on its children's education, that it can spend to look after its children and enhance their childhood. These are important measures.

We have also given tax credits for the arts so children can be enrolled in arts programs and cultural programs. We are also extending caregiver tax credits so family members can look after other family members who need it most.

Those are just some of the programs that we have introduced to help families.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with pride and humility today, I would like to thank the citizens of Prince Edward—Hastings for the overwhelming support they have given me in returning me to the House for the fourth time.

I am so privileged and proud to be able to speak on this budget today, a budget that I find has not only overwhelming support across this nation, but such positive attributes for Canadians. The reason is very clear and simple. This budget is about one thing. This budget is about people. It is about the couple on the main street, running its own business. It is about the students who are attending college or university, trying to further their career prospects. It about the seniors who have contributed to their community all their lives. It is about the manufacturers. It is about the farmers. It is about the foresters. It is about consumers. It is about families. Yes, it is about real people.

The constituents of my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings represent many walks of life. This budget benefits them as it benefits people from across this nation.

This is the budget that strikes the critical balance in focusing on the economy, on the jobs and on the growth, while also delivering on the everyday needs of Canadians.

More important, this is the budget that follows up on our commitments, that mirrors our election promises and that effectively does what we said we would do.

This budget, prepared for the 41st Parliament, builds further upon the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

This government will support job creation by helping businesses and entrepreneurs succeed, keeping taxes low, investing in projects of national importance and in maintaining Canada's brand as one of the best places in which to invest and live in the world.

The next phase of the action plan advances these priorities by providing a temporary hiring credit for small businesses to encourage additional hiring by the vital sector. Having had a successful career as a small business owner myself, who over the years employed hundreds of citizens, I can tell members from personal experience how important this incentive is for job creation.

As well, we will extend the work-sharing program, the target initiative for older workers, to help Canadians stay in the workforce. We will support extending the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investment in manufacturing or processing machinery and equipment for another two years. Locally, hundreds

of small businesses in my riding to larger companies like Kellogg's or Procter & Gamble have all made significant capital investment and the resultant jobs have been, and will continue to be, created as a result of this magnificent and most effective tax credit.

We will legislate a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund for municipalities.

As a former municipal councillor and deputy reeve, I know how important predictable and dedicated funding is for effective infrastructure planning.

We will invest to promote innovation in Canada's important agriculture, forestry and mining sectors.

As promised during my campaign, and I certainly thank the finance minister, I am pleased to keep our commitment of \$20 million over two years to extend the tremendously successful eastern Ontario development program.

This government will support families and communities so all Canadians can enjoy a high standard of living and our communities can stay vibrant and safe.

The next phase of our action plan is to invest in these goals by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old age security and the GIS and who may be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit of \$600 per year for single seniors and \$840 per year for couples. This measure represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year and will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

In my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, we now have the second highest concentration of seniors in Ontario as well as a significantly lower rural income base. I can assure members that the support of our seniors for this initiative is overwhelming.

● (1800)

We will attract more health care workers to underserved remote and rural areas by forgiving up to \$400,000 of the federal component of Canada student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses.

We will introduce a new \$2,000 family caregiver tax credit amount that will provide tax relief to caregivers of infirm dependent relatives including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children. In many rural ridings such as mine, we have a severe shortage of senior care facilities. Initiatives such as this will certainly go a long way to provide much-needed assistance.

We will also introduce a new children's arts tax credit of up to \$500 per child of eligible fees associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

The Budget

We will introduce a \$3,000 volunteer firefighter tax credit for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities. In my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings and in many similar ridings in rural Canada, the communities are serviced by dedicated volunteer firefighters. This measure demonstrates very clearly our gratitude, our support and our appreciation.

We will provide nearly \$870 million over two years to address climate change and air quality, including the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program that will help homeowners make their homes more energy efficient and reduce the burden of high energy costs.

This government will promote research and leading-edge technologies by providing \$80 million in new funding over three years through the industrial research assistance program to help small and medium-sized businesses accelerate their adoption of key information and communication technologies through collaborative projects with colleges and colleagues. Across the country, and certainly in my riding, we have experienced and benefited from tremendous co-operation among these innovators, the entrepreneurs and our colleges. Across the country, the progression of the knowledge economy is absolutely crucial to our competitiveness.

We will establish 10 new Canada excellence research chairs, some of which will be active in fields relevant to Canada's digital economy strategy.

We will increase the budgets of all three federal granting councils by \$47 million annually, including support for indirect costs.

We will improve commercialization and supporting demonstration of new technologies in the marketplace by supporting research links among colleges, universities and businesses.

We will enhance and expand Canada student loans and grants for part-time as well as full-time post-secondary students.

We will encourage skills certification by making all occupational, trade and professional examination fees eligible for tax relief.

Finally and importantly, this government will balance the budget. We will deliver more than \$500 million in new ongoing savings from the 2010 round of strategic reviews. We will protect the integrity and fairness of the Canadian tax system by closing tax loopholes. We will launch a comprehensive one-year strategic and operating review of departmental spending across all of government in 2011-2012.

One simply has to listen to the numerous positive accolades for this budget from across the country. Positive comments have flowed from individuals, groups, organizations, municipalities, provinces, labour, management, professionals, small businesses, manufacturers, scientists, educators, students, seniors and parents.

As I said in my opening comment, this budget is about people. It is about where we are and where we are going as a nation. It looks out for the most vulnerable and yet, very importantly, it looks ahead. I am proud and excited to be a member of this government going forward with this budget that will preserve Canada's advantage in the global economy; strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors and families; and provide the stability necessary to secure our recovery in this uncertain world.

•(1805)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I almost got so caught up with the enthusiasm of the member as to look again at the notes in my budget and wonder if we were looking at the same thing.

I appreciate the member's passion and I welcome him back to the House, but there are a lot of issues that are not being dealt with in this budget. I could talk about the fact that we could be lifting all seniors out of poverty, rather than just having some people helping them out of bed. It could actually be all seniors. They deserve that help.

As well, I could talk about our need to invest more in cities and transportation.

However, there is one issue I know this member particularly cares about. We saw a lot of people, former Nortel employees, who were promised help. I know there are people in his riding who were affected, people who are former Nortel pensioners.

Where in this budget is there any provision to help someone like a former Nortel pensioner or someone who was left on the side? Is there anything in this budget for them?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, this question is very important and, as he knows, dear to my heart, as I have one of the largest groups of Nortel retirees in Canada in my riding. During this election and for the last number of years I have known many of these people personally. I have witnessed the heartache, particularly over long-term disability as well as over the pension issue.

I first became aware of this situation when a number of people told me they were only going to get maybe 15% to 20% of their pensions by the time it unwinds. Whether it was fraud or mismanagement is, of course, yet to be determined.

We as a government asked what we could do. We undertook a number of initiatives, and right now the regular retirees are probably going to get well in excess of 80% through a number of concrete actions taken by this government.

Is it enough? Of course not. We always want it replaced. However, I can thank the finance minister for putting actions and activities into the previous budget as well as the current one to deal with that reality.

It cannot be retroactive. We understand that. Even Nortel employees recognize that, but we have to deal with the eventualities of other corporations in the future that can be impacted by legislation that we bring forward.

•(1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the candour in the response addressing Nortel seniors. I want to ask the member a question with regard to the commitment in this budget to seniors.

The Budget

Canada is a country of great wealth and has so much potential. We can reflect upon what we are providing to seniors, and it would be very difficult to find anyone who would say we are not giving enough money to our seniors. The government has come forward and said how much it is going to give them, and it works out roughly to an increase of \$1.60 to \$1.70 a day.

Does the member anticipate this is going to be increasing over the next year or two? Is that enough for seniors, looking forward?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, the member is right in one context, in that we have one serious problem in addition to the ones we are dealing with as a nation, which is that we are an aging society. Increasing pressure will be put on all governments around the world to address the growing demographic demand of seniors.

As such, we have recognized that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution. There are seniors who are wealthy and others who live in poverty. There are seniors who need assistance in various ways and there are others who need assistance in definitive ways. We have introduced a myriad of programs over the past three to five years, and in this budget I am particularly delighted to see a number of initiatives across the board that will help many different people in many different ways.

Will there still be more to do as we move forward? There will be, absolutely. That is why this is the budget for this year and why we introduce a new budget every year. It is in order to deal with the changing demographic demands of our society.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise you that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Davenport.

Earlier today I had the opportunity to extend my deepest thanks to the people of Beaches—East York and to my family for supporting my desire to represent the people of Beaches—East York in this House. Allow me to extend my thanks to the hundreds of volunteers and staff who gave up their time and family life to support our successful campaign in Beaches—East York. It is my hope that I am able to justify their time and effort by my conduct in the House.

Let me begin my comments by saying how proud and humbled I am to be sitting as a member of the official opposition among such a large NDP caucus, a caucus full of such talent, potential and accomplishment and, importantly, optimism. Let me also extend my congratulations to all members on that side of the aisle and a few more on this side of the aisle on their success on May 2. Their sense of pride with their accomplishment on May 2 is manifest.

I would like to suggest that for all of us, as we get on with the business of this House, modesty and humility is more the order of the day. We have failed too many Canadians too often and for too long, so the challenges that we must confront and conquer are now formidable, and increasingly so, but a tremendous opportunity presents itself to us.

It is the opportunity, in a House with this particular partisan configuration, a majority government without the support of the majority of Canadians, to reach across the aisle to invite all members of the House to work together to address these challenges.

It is an opportunity that threatens to elude us shortly by way of the government's commitment to its regurgitated budget. From where I stand in this House, this budget has been seen and already judged and found wanting by the people of Beaches—East York precisely because it did not address the challenges that I have referred to.

It is a budget that leaves seniors in poverty when we have before us both the opportunity to and the imperative of lifting all seniors out of poverty immediately.

It is a budget that fails to address the needs of families for affordable and accessible child care when we should be providing single-parent families, two-parent families, working families as well as families without work, access to the affordable child care that they need to make ends meet.

It is a budget that continues to hang enormous debt around the necks of young Canadians who choose to pursue an education when we should be helping the young people of this country fulfill their potential and, in doing so, fulfill the promise of this country.

It is a budget that continues to leave new Canadians socially and economically isolated, their education skills and energy going wasted when we should be keeping our promise to all those we invite into this country to make use of their skills and energy, and in doing so, engage them in our collective effort to build always a better future for this country.

It is a budget that fails to put workers back into empty factories, businesses back into empty storefronts, and consumers back into shops when we should be using the resources of the Government of Canada to grow a competitive economy with good, well-paying jobs and secure pensions.

It is a budget that ignores the plight of our cities, the fact that our cities are vastly underfunded and carry a \$123 billion infrastructure deficit, and have become places of stark, economic disparity. Our cities should be recognized as places with tremendous potential for cultural creativity, for economic ingenuity and growth, for energy efficiency, and a meaningful response to global warming. Our cities should be at the forefront of our national agenda.

Finally, this is a budget that is short-sighted in that it is nothing new. It seems in fact to be something of a tradition passed on between Conservative and Liberal and Conservative governments. Both minority and majority governments have, for years and years, carried on without looking to the horizon to see how to navigate through the challenges ahead, to see the critical issues that will inevitably and profoundly reshape our future.

And so, we have a budget that pretends that there is no health care crisis for this country's seniors and their families. Time after time, seniors in Beaches—East York talked to me about their struggles, trying to provide care for their partners because there was no other care available.

● (1815)

Time after time, people my age answered the door, wanting to talk about their difficulties providing care for their parents while raising their kids. Very often the conversation turned to the need for the government to provide help with the growing need for psycho-geriatric care.

The Budget

We have a budget that pretends there is no climate change crisis. Islands are sinking below water in our oceans and seas, the permafrost is thawing below communities in our north, and the government carries on giving taxpayer money away to big oil corporations so that we hasten that process.

It is very clearly the expectation of the people of Beaches—East York that the government of this country think beyond tomorrow. We will never leave our children a great country if we do not do so.

I urge the government to seize the opportunity that we have before us. I noted at the beginning that we have an opportunity to recover our vision to build a great country. We can begin modestly, one practical step at a time. I believe it to be our responsibility to do so, and it is very clearly the expectation of my constituents that we do so.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the hon. member for Beaches—East York whose constituents will be very well represented. We heard how thorough his speech was. I agreed with it. I would like to give him the opportunity to talk a little more about this issue since I know he represents a riding with many pockets of poverty.

What could the budget have included to provide more assistance to the people of Beaches—East York, particularly its seniors? Does the hon. member believe that an amount of less than \$2 per day is sufficient to help many seniors get out of poverty?

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, clearly in a city as big and expensive as Toronto, the government's budget promises to the seniors of this country is wholly inadequate. The \$1.50 or \$1.60 a day, whatever it works out to, is offensive to the seniors of this country living in poverty.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about other communities within Beaches—East York and across this country who are also living in poverty. What people need more than anything else are jobs, and what the government fails to provide to people in Canada are jobs.

The government's single job initiative, corporate tax cuts, has failed to provide jobs for Canadians. The government will be aware there are studies that show that the highest tax cuts occurred back in the 1980s, and investment in capital spending in this country has been declining since, irrespective of corporate tax cuts in this country.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite on his election.

I commend to him the budget that was presented in the House on Monday this week. It is an important document, as has been said by other members. It not only reflects fiscal matters, but it reflects the general policy of the Government of Canada.

I commend to him the measures to support job creation that are listed on page 15 of the budget. Perhaps the member would like to read that over the weekend.

I commend to him the fact that as set out at page 58 of the budget, that Canada has the best job creation among the industrialized nations in the world, since the great recession.

I commend to him also the graph on page 30 that sets out the quality of the jobs created in Canada, the majority of them being high paid jobs, and of course the fundamental facts set out page 14, that more than 540,000 new jobs have been created in Canada since the great recession ended in July 2009 which is, of course, a record in the industrialized nation.

For the new member to suggest with any seriousness that Canada has not done a very good job in job creation is an error.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for his commendations. I would point out that we have 300,000 more people unemployed in this country since before the recession.

In return, I would also commend to the Minister of Finance the website of the Department of Finance that shows the economic multipliers for various forms of investment. The website shows that the economic multiplier attached to corporate tax cuts is about 20¢ for every dollar invested. That very same website for the Department of Finance shows that other investments the government had the opportunity to make through its budget have multipliers that far exceed that, including investments in public infrastructure and fiscal infrastructure, which would be very useful in the city of Toronto as we severely lack in urban transit.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year the House unanimously approved a motion put forward by my hon. colleague from Trinity—Spadina to declare June 10 Canada-Portugal Day. This Saturday's Portugal Day celebrations include a parade in Toronto through my riding of Davenport and Trinity—Spadina.

Parliament expressed gratitude for the great contribution of the Luso-Canadian community to Canada, a community whose roots in Canada date back to the 16th century. Today almost half a million people of Portuguese descent call Canada home.

On the streets of Little Portugal in my riding of Davenport in the communities north of St. Clair and the communities north of Rogers Road there is deep concern and consternation and I dare say there is anger at how the Conservative government is treating seniors in the budget.

Maybe in some areas of the country it is a little cheaper to live than others, but in Davenport seniors are barely hanging on. I have spoken to many Portuguese seniors over the last year. Many of them bought their homes in the fifties and the sixties and they raised their families in those homes. They are still living in the same homes and they are proud of that fact. Yet they can barely hang on. They can barely pay their heating bills let alone all the other utilities. If they were listening to some of the debates that have been going on in the House this week, they would be scratching their heads. They would be very concerned about the level of debate in the House around the real problems for seniors.

The Budget

There are seniors in my community who have no home care, seniors who cannot get around. People say that if their home is too expensive then why not just sell it. Where are they going to go? Are they going to live in a gazebo? I do not think so. A gazebo is not a national housing strategy.

Many seniors cannot get around. We need a national transit strategy in this country. The purchase of fighter jets is not a national transit strategy. That is what we need here.

I hear time and time again from people in Davenport that there are just no decent jobs around. The government says that it has created jobs, but we need to drill down and ask it what kind of jobs it created. I can tell the House what kind they are. Seniors in my riding are working at very low paying, \$10 an hour service jobs. They maybe at one point had a decent job with a pension but they do not have that job any more. These are the real issues.

People say that the economy is doing well, that the recession is over. Constituents in my riding tell me that the recession for many people is not over. The jobless problem has not been adequately dealt with by the government, certainly not in the budget.

One would think that if the government were reintroducing the budget, it might have taken some time to get a few of those things right, but that is not what happened. We are very concerned. My community of Davenport is concerned.

I started this off by talking about the Portugal Day parade. The reason I did is because so many in our Portuguese community are seniors and they are looking for some help from our government. They have contributed through their blood, sweat and tears to make this country the great country that it is and what they see from the government is a cold shoulder. This is—

● (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I am pleased to tell the member that there will be five minutes remaining in his time when this question is next taken up before the House.

[Translation]

It being 6:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to order made Monday, June 6, 2011.

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, June 13, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The last time the debate was before the House, the hon. member for Davenport had five minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the phenomenal folks of Davenport for according me this great honour of bringing their voices, issues and stories to this House.

I would also like to acknowledge the former member for Davenport who served this House and the riding with great dignity and grace.

I would like to thank my family. This has been, and will continue to be, a family affair. I could not do this without my partner, my love, my wife Michelle and my children, Sam, Charlie and Lucy Rose, as well as our extended family.

Like other members of this House, in Davenport throughout the election and in fact for about a year before the writ dropped, we knocked on many doors. We hear so often that Canadians are disengaged, removed and cynical about politics, but in Davenport we found, and I imagine most of the members in this House found, the opposite to be true.

When at someone's door, the conversation we open ourselves up to is profound, and I daresay life-changing. It certainly changed mine. I would like to thank the people of Davenport. I would like to thank them for their time, patience, good humour, and their engagement at the door.

I know we interrupted people. We interrupted them a lot. They were having their dinner when we knocked on their door. They were

housecleaning or talking on the phone or feeding the baby, sometimes doing all of those things at the same time. We interrupted people when they were renovating their homes or having birthday parties. We woke their sleeping children, which is not a great vote-getting tool.

We caught people as they were rushing out to work or rushing home from work. And since so many people in Davenport are freelancers and are self-employed, independent contractors, small shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, we also interrupted them while they were working.

We knocked on doors and found a father who was sitting in the kitchen wondering when he will ever find a decent paying job again. We knocked on doors and found seniors who no one ever visits. We knocked on doors and found refugees who were fearful of unexpected knocks at the door.

There were new immigrants struggling to get a handle on life in Toronto. We found middle-aged women looking after elderly parents and young children. We found seniors who could not afford to live in the city they helped to build. We found students graduating from college or university with a debt that in my father's day would have been called a mortgage.

We found labourers who had just put in 12 hours, working outside, exposed to the elements, exposed because they have no disability insurance, no sick leave, and no extended health benefits. We found single moms who, every day, squeezed onto the Dufferin bus, who needed better and more affordable public transit but instead got rate hikes and service cuts.

We found urban workers with no workplace pension, no benefits, no job security, and no access to EI. We found middle-class families in debt, unable to afford or even find child care. We found families that could not find a decent, affordable apartment to raise their families.

We found Torontonians just barely getting by with little or nothing in the bank at the end of the month. We see banks recording billions of dollars of profit and they are recording this profit not once a decade, not once every few years but every three months.

The Budget

I was sent here to relay the voices and stories, the needs, hopes and dreams of the people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto, not to advocate on behalf of banks that have plenty of people doing that for them. I am here to tell the stories of the folks of Davenport and that is what I am going to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the member think that the Conservatives' budget protects the pension plans of workers who spent 20, 25 or 30 years working for an employer? These workers lost their pension plan after 30 years of work because their employer went bankrupt. These workers invested in their pension plans to secure their future, and they are losing their money after having worked for 30 years. Does the government not have the responsibility to protect the pensions of the workers who built this country? These people got up every single morning to go to work, and one day they wake up with nothing, even though they thought their retirement was secure. Was this budget not an opportunity for the government to protect these pension plans?

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, when I was knocking on doors during the election campaign, I met many seniors and one woman in particular stood out. She was an elderly woman who had immigrated here from Portugal. She had worked at the same factory for 23 years. She was a faithful, hard-working woman. She raised a family in Toronto and after 23 years the company closed up shop, and she was out of luck, with no pension. She is now working at Wal-Mart, one of the job-creation strategies of the government. She is having a very difficult time getting by.

I heartily concur with my hon. colleague here that, indeed, it is the government's responsibility to ensure that companies honour their commitment to workers, just as workers have honoured their commitment.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my friend from the opposite side to the House. I was listening to his speech carefully. He addressed some issues which are very near and dear to my heart as well. He talked about immigrants. He talked about elderly parents. He talked about seniors. He of course talked about students as well.

In this budget this government has come up with a plan which has been working. The plan is to support our seniors, our students, our doctors, and our family caregivers who take care of their ailing and infirm relatives at home. Specifically, this is the first time the Canadian government has introduced a firefighters tax credit.

Would the opposite member and his party support this budget?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his congratulations and congratulate him for his victory.

I am not sure if we are talking about the same seniors. When I am talking to seniors in Davenport, they are thinking that a less than \$2 a day increase in their pension is simply not a poverty reduction strategy. It is not going to lift a single senior out of poverty.

Across this country, our seniors, who built this country and made it the great nation it is today, a nation for which we now have the

responsibility of continuing to further that legacy, are wondering where the commitment from their government actually lies.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

At this opportunity, as this is my first speech in the new Parliament, I am pleased to thank the good voters of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for allowing me the privilege, once again, to represent their interests in the Government of Canada. I pledge to faithfully represent their interests to the best of my ability.

I congratulate the Prime Minister for the leadership role he has played in the good governance of Canada; a skill that continues to be acknowledged by thoughtful Canadians and the international community.

Allow me to take this moment to thank my family. My spouse Jamie, my daughters Chantal, Lauren, Ellyse and Amelia stood by me during the election. I thank them for their love, their support, and their patience.

I wish to thank the people who came out to my campaign during the election. I owe them a tremendous thanks from the bottom of my heart. I can assure them their generosity will be remembered.

I also wish to take this opportunity to salute the women and men of CFB Petawawa, which is located in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I gratefully acknowledge the support they have given me since I was first elected in the fall of 2000 and, most recently, in the last election.

The message I received from the military electors in every election in which I have been a candidate has been clear and short, "Keep fighting for us. We need you". I thank them for their support. I will not let them down. I have their backs.

I would also like to acknowledge the people in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke who make a living off the land, be it farming or forestry. Many of the traditional sources of employment, like the working forest, are under severe stress. Unlike, when I was first elected back in 2000, when there were only two MPs from our caucus to represent all of Ontario, today we have a large, strong and vibrant Ontario caucus. I look forward to working with my many new caucus colleagues to ensure the interests of Canadians, particularly, in rural Ontario, always have a voice.

As the MP for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, a sprawling, rural riding in the upper Ottawa valley of eastern Ontario, I depend on valley residents and their common sense approach to life to guide me in Parliament. I am in good company when it comes to taking this approach. Valley wisdom was recognized by the most electorally successful Conservative premier of Ontario, Leslie Frost, when he would recount his favourite story about a judge in the village of Killaloe objecting to the pleas of a big city lawyer in his courtroom and said, "What you say may be in all them books, all right, but it ain't the Law of Killaloe."

Too often today, with the rise of more government and the myriad of laws and regulations, which are the result of too much government, decisions lack the element of common sense Judge Dunlop in Killaloe was dispensing from his rural courtroom.

The budget that was re-introduced by our Conservative government, one that was approved by more voters than anything put forward by the opposition, is imbued with the same common sense. For example, we recognize the simple fact that companies do not pay taxes, people do. When we raise taxes on employers, they pass their costs on to the consumer. It is this common sense approach by our government that has resulted in the creation of 540,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

The best social program is a job. The law of Killaloe is about making difficult decisions on behalf of the people of Canada, without forgetting who we are, and where and how we live. I am pleased to share this story as the Prime Minister and his family joined valley residents near Killaloe for that great valley tradition: the farm pig roast for Canada Day.

The Prime Minister understands the average Canadian who works hard, pays their taxes, and plays by the rules. On May 2 the majority of voters in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke chose to elect a national, stable, majority Conservative government. We in the Conservative government believe that public policy should be driven by facts and evidence, not by ideology. Every step of the way, we will be introducing policies in this House supported by facts, evidence and common sense.

The federal budget has a number of important measures that will benefit the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Local employer Atomic Energy of Canada continues to benefit from having a Conservative government voice. The good news for the 2,700 employees at Chalk River Laboratories is the \$405 million announced in the budget.

• (1115)

The Conservative Party of Canada recognizes that, in order to be an environmental world leader, we need to focus on clean air, water, land and energy, and nuclear is the key to any national emission reduction plan. I have worked very hard to keep the Canadian Neutron Facility, the CNF, and the need for a new multi-purpose research reactor on the science agenda of our country.

In the 1990s, the former government of Jean Chrétien cut the budget of AECL by 42%. AECL then made a decision that basic nuclear research should be discontinued at Chalk River Laboratories unless it supported the commercial division of AECL. The Auditor General observed that AECL could not operate properly because the Liberal government refused to approve any business plan.

The 2006 federal election of the Conservative Party was a game changer for the good of the Chalk River Laboratories of AECL and of the entire upper Ottawa valley. The revitalization of AECL is a key component of our government's strategy for Canada to be a clean energy superpower. The latest budget allocation of \$405 million is evidence of our commitment to the environment and the need to provide dependable, economic sources of electricity for Canadian consumers.

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Support for Canada's military announced in last year's budget does not change. Construction of a new Chinook helicopter hangar at CFB Petawawa is proceeding as planned, as outlined in our government's Canada first defence strategy, and the jobs that come with the needed expansion. Petawawa is experiencing record growth to provide the roads and sewer infrastructure to house the incoming soldiers and support personnel associated with the new helicopter squadron. The town of Petawawa, like all local municipalities, will benefit from the budget measure to legislate the annual \$2 billion gas tax fund expenditure from the federal government for municipal infrastructure.

Our forestry sector will benefit from the \$60 million announced in the budget to assist, innovate and tap into new opportunities abroad. Forestry has been a mainstay in the upper Ottawa valley for many generations and I am committed to working with local foresters to keep that employment base.

In addition to specific budget announcements, like AECL and the \$20 million announced over two years for the eastern Ontario development program, there are a number of specific measures that will benefit individuals. Enhancing the guaranteed income supplement, the GIS, for low income seniors, extending the eco-energy retrofit homes program and introducing the volunteer firefighters tax credit are just some of the measures in the budget that were positively received when I was on the campaign trail. What needs to happen now is for the budget to be passed and voted into law for Canadians to realize the benefits.

Canada's prosperity cannot be taken for granted. During the election campaign, I had the chance to speak to literally thousands of people. The one thing I heard again and again at people's doors is that people want government to remain focused on the economy and jobs. I know our Prime Minister will make choices that honour our shared values to govern on behalf of all Canadians.

The message I heard from voters this past election is that they want to work and they want us to work to get results and to bring people together across rural, urban, regional and provincial lines. This budget moves in that direction by responding to the needs of Canadians with proposals to help middle-class families, proposals that millions of Canadians voted for in the election, such as hiring more family doctors and nurses, making life more affordable, securing pensions and retirement security for seniors, measures that lift all seniors up. Reducing the tax burden sparks full-time job creation.

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This federal budget reaches out to families that need help with their budgets. During the election, I talked to people who have great difficulty making ends meet at the end of the month. I also spoke to individuals who have prospered in today's economy. I heard intense personal stories from people who I took into account to motivate me to work in Parliament.

People are working hard. They are working harder than ever. I have met people who are working two or three jobs to make ends meet in the absence of full-time employment. This budget is for them.

• (1120)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her re-election.

I noted that the member said that the government was basing its budget and its policies on facts, evidence, common sense and on the fact that it wishes to be an environmental world leader. However, the government continues to give billions in corporate tax cuts to the big fossil fuel industry and a mere \$8 million over several years for all of the northern and aboriginal communities in Canada. It killed the eco-energy retrofit program last year and renewed it for only one year.

Why are we not providing a security of tenure and an incentive for the small and medium Canadian businesses, which are the backbone of our economy, to help build up their businesses and to provide well-paying futuristic employment for the young people of Canada?

• (1125)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, there was mention of the eco-energy retrofit homes fund. That program was so popular that the money was exhausted before the end of the fiscal year. Yes, we are reintroducing it once again and we are hoping that people will be gearing up for the construction season so they can take advantage of this very valuable program.

Large companies as well as small companies are benefiting from Canada's budget. Decreasing taxes make us more competitive throughout the world. Large companies, as well as small companies, employ people. Every large company across the spectrum deserves to have the same tax treatment.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke said that this was a very good budget and that the \$11 billion in cuts to federal government programs and services were very much needed. In 2010, prior to the budget being tabled or even conceived of, she said that cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard were warranted. The member said that members of the marine community were far too reliant on services from the Canadian Coast Guard and that people in other parts of Canada would never dream of expecting the Canadian Coast Guard to come to their rescue should they ever be found in trouble.

Does the hon. member agree with her previous statement? Did she have any prior information back in 2010 that her government was about to make significant cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard? Or, were her statements back in 2010 simply in preparation for those cuts trying to make the case or give the illusion that the Canadian Coast Guard does not provide an essential, important service to the Maritime community, to boaters and to those who make their living from the sea? That, indeed, is the impression that is being left.

She agrees with \$11 billion in cuts. One of the very first cuts to be established was to the basic safety and security to mariners. Did the member have any information back in 2010 about those cuts? Does she agree with the closure of MRSC Coast Guard station in St. John's and in Quebec City today?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the safety of mariners is foremost and always has been, but I will give some background.

Members of the defence committee travelled to the Maritimes and visited different bases because there was an issue regarding search and rescue. What we heard over and over again was that Maritimers were suffering as a consequence of the 1993 decision by the federal government, which it campaigned on, to cut the helicopter order. When that order was cancelled, it not only cancelled the Sea King replacement, it also cancelled the search and rescue choppers as well as troop movement. For troop movement, helicopters would have been very helpful in Afghanistan and may have saved a number of lives.

However, the real crux of what we were looking at with respect to the search and rescue helicopters is that after over a billion dollars in penalties and having to pay for other contracts for which we received nothing, we ended up getting the same brand scaled down for more money. As a consequence, we do not have enough helicopters to keep going. We are looking forward to correcting that error as we go on.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I again want to thank the good folks of Cypress Hills—Grasslands for allowing me to return to the House in this session of Parliament.

It has been an interesting ride over the last 10 years. When we were first elected in 2000, we had 66 members of Parliament in our caucus. In 2004, that went to 99, in 2006 to 124, in 2008 to 143 and then we came back with 166 members of Parliament in 2011.

I want to point out that it is not an accident that things have happened this way. We have had a long-term strategy and long-term leadership by the Prime Minister. The first goal was to hold the Liberals accountable in 2004. The Canadian people did that after enduring so much through the ad scam hearings and found out just how deep the rot went in the Liberal government and in the Liberal Party. The people were glad to begin to make a change in 2004.

In 2006, we were able to come to government and early on the Prime Minister's leadership showed through once again very clearly as he moved to reduce taxes right off the bat. We had GST tax reductions. We increased the personal tax exemptions so that many people were removed from the tax roles. That is the kind of leadership that led to 2008 when we were re-elected again.

When the worldwide downturn, the crash, took place, we were ready for that. Canadians were very protected by the government. I hate to think what would have happened had the third party now, the opposition at the time, come to power, because clearly it would have spent us completely into the ground.

We were able to come forward with stimulus spending with the programs Canadians really wanted to see and put them forward. Our economic action plan impacted every community throughout this country. I hear the members opposite even thanking us today for having done that for them. Everyone is glad to see those programs in place that have affected water treatment plants and highways in my riding. The RInC program also had a positive effect on many small communities in my riding. Those grants often were not big grants but they were grants that allowed communities to go ahead with projects they had thought were important for a long time.

Now we come to 2011 and once again I see an increase in the government caucus. I think that has happened because Canadians trust us. Canadians have seen good leadership and good management of the economy. We have trusted leadership and they wanted to see good results and were ready to see those.

We have come to Parliament to bring the throne speech forward and the budget. We are here today to talk about the budget. However, before I do that, I would like to talk on a couple of the key issues that were found in the throne speech that directly impact the budget and will directly impact the next year and subsequent years for Canadians. It is important to note that, as one of the news organizations pointed out, the Conservatives are sticking to their stay-the-course plan with no surprises in the throne speech which lays out their agenda for the coming parliamentary session.

What we told Canadians we wanted to do last year, we presented again this spring when we came back to Parliament. They know what we are about and what we want to bring forward.

In my riding there are a number of very important issues. The one issue that has been around the second longest and has been a real irritant to people in my riding has been the long gun registry. The people in my riding finally have a commitment from the government that the registry will be revoked. It is very good news for the people of Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

The firearms community has asked for a number of reasonable changes to the Firearms Act. In order to carry that out, a few things like licensing infractions, which have been so prevalent because of the way the Liberals set up the entire system, should be taken out of the Criminal Code. If that were done, people would not be charged under the Criminal Code just because they neglected to renew a licence. Certainly, it seems that we should be removing the reverse onus character of this whole legislation. It makes citizens into criminals without them actually doing anything. That would certainly help out as well. With regard to certification, it seems that if we could move the one form of certificate for gun owners, that would be a much simpler system than we have right now.

• (1130)

In terms of training, the provinces and the federal government have had different expectations and demands, and, in some places, different courses. It would certainly be good if we could put those

The Budget

courses together to cover the same material to avoid duplication. We have tried to avoid that in so many other areas in this government and it would be good to do that here as well.

There are some other smaller things from the past, one being that when firearms were seized, they could be returned to wildlife organizations, for example, and then be auctioned off to raise money for wildlife projects. We would like to see a return to that as well. That change only took place in the last couple of years, so there should be nothing untoward about that.

Firearms owners are more than adequately served and prefer to deal with their local RCMP. They have done that in the past and we could move toward that as well. That is one of the things in the throne speech that is important to people in my riding.

Another important issue to my constituents is the funding of political parties. As everyone knows, political parties get their funding in a number of ways. They get it through donations; they get some of their funding from the rebates for election expenses; and they have received funding through the per-voter subsidy. Our government has committed to removing that per-voter subsidy, and that is found in this legislation. People in my riding tell me that it cannot happen too soon. They think that political parties are well taken care of and should be supported by the folks who really want to support them, not by the taxpayer.

A big issue in my riding, and probably the longest term irritant to my folks, is the Canadian Wheat Board. There is a long history to the Canadian Wheat Board, going back to 1943 when crop sales to the wheat board were made mandatory and farmers were not given any choice in the matter. When Europe needed a large supply of cheap grain, the Canadian government made a decision at the time to supply such grain to Europe and it made participation in the Canadian Wheat Board mandatory. Our farmers have been paying the cost of that ever since.

It seems there was no vote when this was imposed on farmers. There was no vote in 1998 when the Liberals changed the legislation to make it impossible for farmers to get out, and that resulted in farmers going to jail. There was no vote by farmers on whether or not they wanted their colleagues and other producers to end up in jail. The previous government was only too happy to do that.

I should note that Australia has opened up its wheat board and that grain acres are actually up there, while Canada has had a long-term decline in the amount of grain acres being seeded. Canola has passed wheat as the number one crop on the Prairies. The reason for that has to do with marketing and the ability of farmers to market their own grain.

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We are looking forward to working with the entire value chain, including the Canadian Wheat Board, to bring in an open market for western Canadian grain so that our farmers have the same opportunities, the same experiences, the same things available to them that other farmers across Canada have.

We want to work with the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board. We want to work with folks who want to see a wheat board exist in some form in western Canada, in order to give our farmers what they would like to see. However, we will certainly not have the single desk, and farmers will be free to market their own grain. By opening the market up, the Canadian grain industry, the farmers, producers and communities, are going to attract investment.

Finally, we will be encouraging innovation. Our new varieties of grain will not have to go to Montana so that I can drive down and watch it being grown across the border where Montana farmers benefit from western Canadian-developed grain. Certainly, value-added jobs will be created across Canada.

We want to work with everyone in the value chain to bring this transition. There is a huge opportunity here for the board and communities. We really want to see them move ahead.

I want to move from the throne speech to the budget speech, as time seems to be going by fairly quickly here.

I just want to touch quickly on the fact that folks in Cypress Hills—Grasslands have told me that there are many challenges. They appreciate what we have done and they want us to work on balancing the budget as quickly as possible, a commitment that we have made. They are encouraging us to move as fast as we can to get back to balanced budgets and then to move on from there. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to represent them.

I found a quote last night by Tony Blair about deficit budgeting that, “The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It’s very easy to say yes”.

We certainly want to be able to say yes to Canadians, but no to spending their money in ways they do not approve.

• (1135)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise for the first time in this new Parliament. Representing the people of the Northwest Territories is always a great pleasure.

I was hoping to rise on the budget, but I also do not mind speaking on the throne speech because we have not had a debate on it yet and there are a number of serious issues with it.

I want to compliment my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands on his re-election as well, because I know he is a hardworking MP and will continue to be so.

He talked about the long gun registry. The Conservatives’ plan to take out the long-gun registry will change the ability of provinces to institute their own registries.

Is the federal government considering making available to the provinces the information that is now available within the national long gun registry, if they wish to constitute their own long gun registries under their property rights acts or any other legislation

pertaining to them? Would the government be willing to turn that information available in the national gun registry over to the provinces?

• (1140)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite on his re-election as well.

The question needs to be asked of the member whether he is going to work with us to revoke the long gun registry, making it much more useful to Canadians, or is he going to oppose those changes?

Certainly the wildlife and firearms communities have been responsible in their asks to government when they have come forward and made suggestions for changes they want to see made in the future.

One of the things we are going to provide funding for, and the member would probably appreciate this, is another \$20.9 million to continue to waive the firearms licence renewal fees for all classes of firearms. We are going to continue to work with firearms owners and communities until we can revoke the long gun registry.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the remarks by the member for Cypress Hills. He claimed that the long-term irritant in his riding was the Canadian Wheat Board. We know his position, that it is to undermine the board and virtually destroy it.

However, there is also another election that takes place in boundaries similar to his own riding’s. That is the election of Canadian Wheat Board directors. In the last election, the pro-single-desk-selling director won substantially. That shows there is a juxtaposition in his riding.

Based on that, is the parliamentary secretary for the Canadian Wheat Board or the government willing to hold a plebiscite so that we can see the position of farmers who are marketing grains specifically? Also, will the government be doing a cost-benefit analysis of the Canadian Wheat Board before it brings in legislation to destroy it?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it actually is very simple: We believe that farmers will support the Canadian Wheat Board with their grain if the Wheat Board is something that will work for them. That is the opportunity we would like to give them.

However, if the member opposite wants to start comparing things, is he now prepared to back our proposal and plans now that we have more seats in western Canada in the agricultural area than his party actually has in the House? Is it not time for him to give up his stubborn position and start working for western Canadian farmers, so they can have the same kind of prosperity and opportunity that farmers have across this country?

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Pontiac.

I am proud to rise in this budget debate as the new MP for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. I am only the third person to hold this seat since its creation. My two predecessors have set a very strong record in representing my riding, they being Dr. Keith Martin and, before him, the former premier of British Columbia, Dave Barrett.

I also want to thank my partner, Teddy Pardede, who I think always supported me in my campaigns because he thought I would never win. Now he is in for a big surprise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has the floor and I would encourage all members in the House to give him the respect he is due.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the voters of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for giving me the privilege of serving as their voice in this House. I pledge to keep their concerns front and centre in all the work I do here.

I represent a very diverse riding, stretching from Willis Point and Prospect Lake in the north, down through Royal Oak, Glanford and West Saanich to Esquimalt, which is my hometown, then west along the Strait of Juan de Fuca through View Royal, Highlands, Langford, Colwood, Metchosin, East Sooke and Sooke, and it does not end there. It stretches to Otter Point and Shirley, through Jordan River and all the way to Point Renfrew. I think I may have the most municipalities of any riding in the country.

When we get to Port Renfrew, we are a long way from downtown Victoria. This geographic reach means that my riding is economically very diverse. We start with industrial workers and government workers downtown and go through the suburbs to farming communities, and end up with logging and fishing as the main supports in Port Renfrew.

It is not as diverse a community in the multicultural sense as many other constituencies. While the percentage of new Canadians may not be large, there are significant communities of Chinese and Indo-Canadians in my riding. I am also proud to say that Esquimalt is home of an Ismaili mosque. In particular, we have a bunch of new Canadians performing very important roles in my community, the very large number of Filipinos working as caregivers and in our health care system. I want to make them welcome here today.

Where Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is most diverse is perhaps surprising to the members of this House. As a gay man, I am proud to stand in this House as a member of the largest minority in my riding, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and transsexual people.

The second-largest group in my riding is first nations. My riding is home to five first nations: the Esquimalt Nation, Songhees, Beecher Bay, Tsouke and Pacheedaht.

Perhaps even more surprising to those in eastern Canada would be that the third largest group in my riding is francophones, largely due to the presence of CFB Esquimalt.

In my riding, there are five main economic drivers, and this budget does very little to help any of those sectors and, in fact,

threatens all five of them. It threatens employment at the base and at the shipyards in my riding. It threatens employment at Victoria General Hospital. It threatens employment in post-secondary education at Royal Roads University and Camosun College. Most importantly, it threatens the new jobs that have appeared in recreation and tourism, and it does nothing to help small business in my riding.

This is a very mixed economy, driven by both public and private sectors.

I want to talk about some of the common concerns in my riding, which are shared with the rest of Canada, concerns like a shortage of family doctors, the affordability of everyday life and the prospect of a secure retirement for all.

In addition, I want to talk about some concerns that are very specific to my riding, in particular the severe lack of infrastructure and services in my riding in the face of very rapid growth in suburban areas. This has led to sprawl that threatens farm lands and wilderness areas. It has led to congestion, as families are forced farther and farther from the core in the search of affordable housing. It has led to an acute shortage of child care spaces, and here I want to tell the House a few of stories I heard during the election campaign.

I met a woman at the door who had been waiting more than a year to go back to work, because she could not find a quality child care space for her child. We not only lose the economic value of her not returning to work but that family also loses economically every day when she cannot go back to work because there is not a safe, quality child care place for her child.

I met a family in Sooke forced to drop one child in Langford, a 20-minute drive away, then to drive another 20 minutes to Esquimalt to drop the other child off before they can both then head to their jobs. So that family is spending an increasingly long period of time together in the car instead of at home where they belong.

I met a Saanich family whose child care arrangements for their three children were such a complicated patchwork that they actually had to use a spreadsheet to make sure they picked up all of their kids at the right place at the right time, because both parents have to work to afford housing in my community.

Residents in my community are also concerned about the potential cutbacks that will cause job losses at the base. They are concerned because of the enormous uncertainty for the families of those who serve in the Canadian reserves and those who work in civilian positions at the base.

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• (1145)

However, they are also concerned that the impact of those cuts may affect the ability of the Canadian Forces to do the difficult and dangerous jobs we ask them to do every day on our behalf. So far, the government has not made it clear what kinds of cuts those will be and who will pay the price of the corporate tax cuts being handed out in this budget.

People in my riding are also concerned about endangered species like wild salmon and orcas because the environment is not only essential to our future species, but also to the hundreds of jobs that exist in my riding in fishing, recreation and tourism.

How does the budget address the common concerns about which I have talked? The answer is, not at all. In my riding no family doctor is currently taking new patients. If people's family doctor retires or gets ill, where do they go? They go to the emergency room, which drives health care costs up, and there is nothing in the budget to ensure there will be more family doctors for families in my riding.

On affordable housing, there is nothing at all in the budget. Lack of affordable housing leads to homelessness and couch surfing for hundreds of people in my riding. It also leads to far too many families spending far too high a percentage of their incomes on housing. This means many families whose parents work end up at food banks. When we talk about how the recession ended, that is simply not true for most families in my riding. What do we find on their behalf in the budget? Nothing. There is nothing for child care and nothing for affordable housing.

How about infrastructure? Congestion in my riding causes lost dollars in the economy, harm to the environment and lost time for families. We need the federal government to step up to the plate with adequate funding for rapid transit and restoring E&N Rail, which both the Liberals and Conservatives have neglected so passenger service can no longer be run on this railway, which was a condition of British Columbia joining Confederation.

People in my riding are also worried about a secure retirement. Once they have paid the high costs of housing and child care, helped their kids pay the high cost of post-secondary education and helped their parents with the high cost of prescription drugs, there is very little left to put away for their own retirement. What are the Conservatives doing? They are pushing for something that very few outside Bay Street want. They are pushing for a private and voluntary retirement savings plan, where most of the increase in retirement income will be sucked up by the brokers on Bay Street rather than go into the hands of hard-working retirees. What Canadians want and need is an expanded and strengthened CPP.

On the question of jobs, what do we find in the budget? We find the wrong approach. The government is promising to cut more than 2,000 defence jobs, creating great uncertainty in my riding.

When it comes to shipbuilding, the government is playing favourites, trying to pick winners which may kill off shipyards in some parts of our country by denying a fair distribution of this important work around the country and by threatening the ability to build and maintain our own ships on all coasts in the country.

It seems to me that the Conservatives are curiously proud to have introduced the same budget they introduced in March. They are curiously proud not to have listened to Canadians during the election campaign.

I want to close by referring to a letter I received from Mrs. Pommelet's grade 4-5 class at Marigold School in my riding. In their letter, the students call on all of us in the House to do something about congestion that makes them late for their sports practices, to do something about the threatened cuts that might weaken our defences at CFB Esquimalt and to do something to protect our coastal environment against existing tanker traffic.

Even these grade 4-5 students in my riding recognize what the government does not recognize in the budget. They recognize that we are a community that needs to be addressing pressing common problems much more than huge corporate tax cuts, that tackling these common problems together will do far more for our future prosperity than the government's approach and that working together is essential for our common survival on this planet.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to welcome the hon. member, who is also from beautiful British Columbia, and I thank him for his comments. I have two questions for him. The first one is a general question, and the second is more specific.

In British Columbia, we had the opportunity to see this budget before and during the election. I think that most people in the province knew what the Conservatives would do if we had the honour to be re-elected. They were very familiar with the budget and platform, and they once again voted with confidence.

Second, the \$3,000 tax credit for firefighters was important to the people of British Columbia. People in that province wanted it. That is something in the budget that is very well known and well received by the people of British Columbia. What does the member have to say about that?

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election.

On the general question, the majority of British Columbians did not vote for the Conservative government and in my riding they did not vote for this agenda.

On the member's very specific question, I would very much like to stand in the House and support a tax credit for volunteer firefighters, but in my riding that needs to be a refundable tax credit, which this credit is not.

During the election campaign I met with Chelsea Kuzman, the volunteer fire chief in Port Renfrew in my riding. She is not only one of the few women volunteer fire chiefs, she is also the youngest volunteer fire chief in the country, at the age of 21.

This is a community where employment is largely seasonal and if people can get work, sometimes it is only part-time for part of the year.

I would only be supporting these kinds of tax credits if those volunteer firefighters in Port Renfrew could access those tax credits by making them refundable.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to extend congratulations to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca on his election. As it happens, we are neighbours. I am very pleased to see him here on behalf of his constituents.

Has the hon. member had an opportunity to look at the Parliamentary Budget Officer's most recent report? The fact is the government has used tax credits as the largest, fastest growing component of budgetary expenditures. The effect of these sorts of tax credits, as he has rightly pointed out, do not benefit people who are not able to pay taxes. Could the member comment on whether we need more oversight of this matter?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her victory. As she has said, we are in neighbouring ridings. One of the many municipalities in my riding is the municipality of Saanich, which I share with the hon. member. I expect to see her at many of the same community events in the future.

On the question of tax credits, as I mentioned, my problem with the Conservative approach is that these are non-refundable tax credits. There are many people in my riding who actually need help, but the fact that these are non-refundable tax credits means they are no help at all. In particular, volunteer firefighters are taking great risks with potentially great sacrifices on behalf of their community, yet the government denies them the benefit of these tax credits.

I would much rather see a fair tax system to start with, a system that would promote the creation of jobs in my riding so many more people would not have to be dependent on tax credits.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Assistant Deputy Speaker.

It is an honour for me to rise in this chamber for the first time on behalf of the people of Pontiac. First and foremost, I would like to say a big thank you to the people of my riding for their trust in me. It is with great pride that I accept the mandate to represent the interests of their families. I promise that I will do so every day in a dedicated, committed and constructive manner, along with all the members of the House, in order to achieve tangible results for my constituents.

Communities like mine did not simply choose a new member of Parliament. In the history of my riding, with only one exception, voters have elected Conservative or Liberal members since 1867. However, this year, like 4.5 million Canadians across the country and 1.5 million Quebecers, they sent a clear message: they want

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change in Ottawa. It is even more apparent that they want a Canada where the people's interests are the priority and where no one is left behind. I am extremely proud to note that the people of my riding want this positive change but, like them, I am very concerned. I am concerned because the government does not seem to have understood that 60% of the population did not vote for them.

As a result, we once again have before us the same budget that reflects the Conservatives' same old habits, that puts the profits of big business ahead of the interests of the people, that puts the interests of the most profitable banks far above those of Canadian families, that puts the interests of big polluters far ahead of environmental concerns, and that puts the interests of companies that are sending our jobs abroad far ahead of those of small Canadian businesses that create jobs in Canada.

I am concerned because there are real problems in my riding of Pontiac, which is one of the most underprivileged ridings in Quebec. These are problems that do not exist in the Bay Street boardrooms or the big boardrooms of large oil companies. These are serious, tangible problems. Among other things, we, like other areas, have lost many jobs in the forestry industry, an industry that is currently in crisis. Since 2003, we have lost almost 75,000 jobs across Canada. The forestry industry accounts for close to 12% of the manufacturing GNP in Canada. It is a cornerstone of 300 communities, a number of which are in Quebec and in my riding of Pontiac.

In its budget, the government claims that it is coming to the aid of the forestry industry, but it is not enough. The government continues to favour the big oil companies and the automotive industry with billions of dollars in tax breaks despite the fact that the forestry industry employs at least twice as many people.

If the government had wanted to help the industry, it could have easily provided at least the same level of assistance it gave to automobile manufacturers. It could have ensured that loans at reasonable rates were available to help the industry refinance its debt and adapt to new market realities, such as renewable and green technology.

In addition, I have spoken with people who used to work in the industry and they are worried about their retirement income. Some of the workers, such as those who worked at the paper mill in Masson-Angers, stand to lose as much as 40% of their pensions because foreign companies are filing for bankruptcy and the government is not protecting Canadians' pensions.

Instead of creating sustainable jobs in this industry and protecting workers' pensions, this government is choosing to put its friends' interests before everyone else's.

● (1200)

[English]

I have also recently had the honour of meeting with leaders of the Kitigan Zibi First Nation. Much of the Pontiac is on Algonquin territory. I also take this opportunity to recognize that this very House and Parliament rests on Algonquin land. I, for one, thank the Algonquin people for their welcome.

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The Algonquins of the Pontiac are deeply worried. On Kitigan Zibi, for example, more than 60% of the people do not have access to basic water infrastructure. The water they do have is so radiated that it is not even fit for animal, let alone human consumption. In addition, some houses sit on land where radon gases are three times the allowable amount.

These serious basic problems keep them from investing sufficiently in other necessary services like education and policing.

As the Auditor General recently pointed out, these fundamental issues of survival among our first nation peoples are a blot on Canada. It is a shame that this budget does not even go far enough to begin to address these problems.

The Algonquins of the Pontiac and I truly wonder what the government is waiting for.

I have also talked to the people in the south of my riding. They are deeply worried by the announced cuts to the public service.

Having worked as a public servant for more than 10 years, I know very well what "strategic" and "operational reviews" are code words for: unacceptable workloads, more contracting out of jobs, fewer good-paying jobs and fewer opportunities for promotion, but these cuts are also bad for all Canadians. The reliance on attrition and efficiencies in the public sector to balance the budget will reduce the quality of the services provided by the public service workers as they are called upon to provide the same services to Canadians with fewer resources and less staff.

Yet, the government is moving forward with \$4 billion in cuts to public services, while it continues to be less than forthcoming as to where it thinks the fat is that it is likely to be trimming.

• (1205)

[Translation]

I have also spoken with seniors in my riding who cannot make ends meet, and whose income is not increasing. Yet the budget contains nothing except promises of meetings sometime in the future; there are no measures to improve our public pensions. It is unacceptable that seniors are living in poverty.

I have also spoken with people who cannot find a family doctor or who have to wait months to see a specialist. It is even harder in areas like mine, the Pontiac, in Maniwaki, Gracefield, Bouchette, Shawville and other places. Yet the government is simply proposing that we forgive a portion of student debt for doctors and nurses. There is no mention of increasing the number of doctors in areas such as the Pontiac, where thousands of people do not have access to a family doctor. Many people are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing major polluters instead of promoting a green economy and protecting the water in our lakes and rivers.

All of these reasons will keep me from voting for this budget and for the same old Conservative rhetoric.

[English]

However, in the near future, I trust that the Prime Minister will respect the mandate that our team brings into Parliament. I look forward to working with all members of the House on practical

solutions that will make a difference for the majority of the citizens in the Pontiac.

The good people in the Pontiac voted New Democrat for the first time and they know exactly what they voted for. They voted for a more respectful government. They voted for a perspective that does not reduce Canadians to economic units, an option which understands that there is more to being a Canadian citizen than paying taxes, that there is such thing as the good life in a country that has at its heart the principle of caring for each other. They voted for a stronger, more social Canada, with a strong place for Quebec in it; a Canada where after a productive life one can take a much deserved rest; a Canada where universal health care is a fact, not simply an empty phrase; a Canada which enables families to make ends meet, that helps create new innovative green jobs; and a Canada which leaves to our children, my children, a beautiful environment filled with diverse ecosystems because it is a good in itself and not a means.

By voting that way, they made history. The mandate they gave our party is crystal clear. I, for one, will work tirelessly and constructively with all my colleagues in the House to fulfill it.

Finally, I would like to say that I am deeply honoured to serve all the people of the Pontiac and that I am doubly honoured to serve the people of Canada, with every member of this House.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate my new colleague on his election to the House.

I took special note of some of the things said about aboriginal people here in Canada. I take a great interest in trying to help the aboriginal people of my country to move forward being that I am Métis and have some very close links to aboriginal people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan alike.

I note that in the budget \$97.2 million is afforded to different projects for aboriginal people and that follows the 2010 budget that allowed for some housing to be built on reserve and a number of other measures.

In the last Parliament we introduced some specific measures that would help aboriginal people. I am interested to know if the member is willing to support those measures? Aboriginal women have suffered greatly because they do not have the same rights as other Canadian women. The matrimonial real property act would afford the same rights to aboriginal women on reserve finally after decades of being suppressed. I am interested to hear yes or no from the member. Would he support the rights of aboriginal women if we bring that bill forward again?

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and I would also like to congratulate her. I support the rights of aboriginal Canadians. Supporting aboriginal rights and supporting the budget are two very different things.

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I visited the Algonquin people in my riding. They looked at the budget. They see what is there for them and feel it is not enough. The budget does not propose enough solutions to basic problems like water. Nor does it do enough to protect the women and children of these communities or even to ensure that these communities have a police force.

Clearly, I will not be supporting this budget, but that does not mean that we cannot work together in the future on this question, which is important to us both.

● (1210)

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Pontiac on his speech and on his election.

I heard him say that 60% of the Algonquin people in his community do not have access to clean water, a basic right and a basic necessity that people the world over need to have. In a country as rich as Canada it is quite shocking that members of his community do not have this basic right.

I would like to ask my colleague what feedback he is getting from his constituents when they learn that the government is going to be giving \$15 billion a year in corporate tax cuts in the budget and yet it is also going to be chopping another \$11 billion out of our public expenditures? What kind of reaction is my colleague getting from his constituents?

Mr. Mathieu Ravnagat: Mr. Speaker, I was talking to Chief Whiteduck just last week. He thinks it is a shame, c'est honteux, that we are giving these tax breaks to the largest and wealthiest corporations in this country when children do not even have access to water, or the water they do have is so poisoned that they cannot even give it to their pet cat.

There are also fundamental issues that this kind of government revenue could address, such as proper policing on aboriginal communities. Crime rates are high. Drug addiction is a big problem. There are a number of issues surrounding radon gas in particular communities on the Kitigan Zibi reserve and also in Barriere Lake. This is my constituents' reaction.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

As I rise to speak formally in the House for the first time since my re-election, I would like to thank the constituents of Edmonton—St. Albert for once again placing their trust in me and returning me to this honourable chamber. I look forward to serving them in my capacity of their member of Parliament.

Many thanks also go to my campaign team and hundreds of volunteers for their hundreds and hundreds of hours of hard work. Special thanks to my family and friends who continued to support me in my role as a member of Parliament.

Our government has clearly demonstrated that our economic action plan is working. If anyone needs proof of this, just last week Statistics Canada announced over 22,000 new net jobs were created in the month of May, bringing the total number of net new jobs to

560,000 since July 2009. The jobless rate is at 7.4%, the lowest it has been in more than two years. This also marks the seventh straight quarter of economic growth.

A recent forecast predicted Canada's economy will grow by 3.2% in 2011, and a further 3.1% in 2012. The future for Canada is bright and the steady job growth rate demonstrates our government is clearly on the right track.

Canadians have given our government a strong mandate to focus on building a stable economy and securing jobs. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan stays the course with a prudent, low tax plan that will continue to support the economic recovery and create more jobs.

This budget contains new measures that will have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of every Canadian. These include a new children's art tax credit and a new family caregiver tax credit, extending the popular eco-energy retrofit program to help families lower their heating and electricity bills, enhancing the GIS so that low income seniors will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, and enhancing or extending the programs to help businesses keep workers and providing a hiring credit for small businesses to make new hires. These measures build on our government's strong record of support for families, seniors and small businesses, a record that I believe speaks for itself.

I would also draw attention to several significant specific achievements of this government. We have cut taxes more than 120 times since forming government and increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. Thanks to our Conservative government's decisive tax relief actions, a typical family will save more than \$3,000 a year in taxes. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, and the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. Significantly, we have removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls altogether, and introduced pension income splitting for seniors.

I am also pleased to see our government has set out a three point plan to eliminate the deficit, a plan that is achievable and measurable. As a result, we remain on track to balance the budget by 2014-15. I am proud of the work our government has done to bring our country through the global downturn. By all accounts, we have done a remarkable job and set an example for the entire world to follow. For these reasons, I will support this budget.

However, high taxes are still a problem for Canadian taxpayers. The Fraser Institute recently declared Monday, June 6 as tax freedom day, the day on which average Canadians have paid their total tax bill for the year and at that point start working for themselves.

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In 2011, the average Canadian family will earn \$93,831 in income and pay a total of \$39,960 in taxes to all levels of government, or 42.6%. This year's tax freedom day is two days later than last year's, and ironically is due to our growing economy and Canadians' increasing incomes, which moved many of them into higher tax brackets. There is no sign that tax freedom day will arrive any sooner next year.

Over and over again I am asked, why is it so difficult for government to trim the excess when Canadians across the country have to cut back on their variable spending and make a conscious effort to stretch their hard-earned dollars to the limit. This budget optimistically predicts \$4 billion in savings, or 1.5% of total federal spending. If federal departments were able to spend \$4 billion less than expected last year without any planning or cuts, then I would suggest we could actually find additional savings within the budget's proposed \$4 billion. Canadians expect nothing less of us, and we should reward their trust by delivering common sense federal spending proposals to utilize taxpayers' moneys effectively and efficiently.

• (1215)

Last week, the Manning Institute published research indicating that a vast majority of Canadians, over two-thirds, are becoming less dependent on government. Canadians expect less of government, except in core areas such as public safety. Canadians are increasingly more reliant on themselves, their families and volunteer organizations, and becoming less reliant on government. Canadian taxpayers expect government to focus on that which it can do effectively and efficiently.

Accordingly, the government will conduct a one-year government-wide strategic and operating review as part of our three-point plan to balance the budget. Perhaps one of the first areas we should focus our attention on is the duplication of federal and provincial departments and programs.

Theoretically, it is estimated that the federal government could reduce its operating budget by \$44 billion a year and therefore eliminate the deficit by spending only in areas that fall under the federal government's exclusive jurisdiction, and I mention that theoretically. I am certainly not advocating leaving the provinces entirely to their own devices. However, one must seriously question the efficiency of parallel bureaucratic structures administering essentially the same programs. After all, there is only one taxpayer.

Some observers believe we may be facing a long-term structural deficit problem that would not be resolved by simply trimming a mere \$4 billion of so-called government fat. A study for the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies asked why we have never considered "whether government can be restructured in any significant way as to deliver essentially the same level of service to the public at a significantly reduced cost and size."

In this phase of our fiscal reality, all areas of government must fall under the microscope. A first and important step in this process is the elimination of the \$2 per vote subsidy to all political parties. Although not mentioned in budget 2011, greater savings will be realized by the imminent elimination of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

Eliminating unnecessary services and programs is easy. However, to effectively find our way back to balanced budgets, we must also seriously examine the cost of providing services deemed necessary. This examination will inevitably turn to the government's own human resources. We cannot continue to sustain a public sector whose growth outpaces every other category in size and compensation.

Between 1999 and 2009, the Canadian population increased by 11% but the federal government's civilian workforce grew by 35%, and public sector compensation grew by 59% compared to 30% in the private sector. Canada is fortunate to have an outstanding civil service. However, if balanced budgets are to be achieved, all unsustainable trends must be addressed. Perhaps we should view the predicted rise in attrition as an opportunity and not as a threat. The result would be a significantly less expensive public sector.

Based on the facts before us, some economists believe we are fast approaching a tipping point in our nation's finances. If we do not reduce government expenditures from 43% to 38% of GDP over the next decade, as recommended by the International Monetary Fund, invariably the result will be higher taxes, dangerous debt loads or both. As the experience of European countries such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal has demonstrated, this path must be avoided at all costs.

Canadians are increasingly demanding tax relief, balanced budget and smaller governments. It is always easier to borrow money when someone else will have to repay it than to cut spending. Similarly, it is always easier to say "yes" and cut a cheque than to say "no". Saying "no" takes courage and resolve.

However, on May 2, Canadians gave this government a mandate to deliver on the promises it has made. A majority government is also an opportunity to set Canada on a permanent course toward greater fiscal responsibility. The budget before this House is an important first step in this pivotal journey.

• (1220)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for his re-election. I enjoy the flights with him back and forth between Alberta and Ottawa on a regular basis.

Health care is the number one issue in the province of Alberta. Access to universal public health care is, of course, one of those necessarily public services. Many in Edmonton, as across Canada, still lack access to a family doctor. Recently, information has been revealed, allegations made by the former head of the Alberta health authority, that privileged access to doctors and specialized medical services may be being provided by the Alberta government. That, of course, would be a potential violation of the Canada Health Act.

Has the hon. member raised these issues and concerns, raised by his constituents in Edmonton, about these allegations and about the fact that there is lack of access to family physicians? Also, has he suggested that the Minister of Health ought to look into these allegations?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Edmonton—Strathcona for her re-election to this House.

As the hon. member knows and as many members of this House know, I was a former member of the Alberta Legislature, serving Edmonton Calder from 2001-04, at about the time some of these allegations were made regarding privileged access to physicians.

I have seen no evidence that this has occurred. I certainly invite the hon. member or the hon. member of the Alberta Legislature who believes that this is the case to bring forward this evidence. At this point there are only unsubstantiated allegations.

Health care is certainly an issue for my constituents, as I am confident it is for hers. This government has given student loan relief to physicians and to nurses who are prepared to relocate to more remote parts of Canada where physicians and nurses are sadly lacking. I think that is an important first step to solving the health care crisis.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome and congratulate my colleague from Edmonton—St. Albert on his victory of May 2.

The member did talk a little bit about the operating review. It is an important point because, as we have seen in New Brunswick, we have a significant export economy, especially to the U.S. Many of our small businesses have seen a dramatic increase in the Canadian dollar. Also, with the recession, they were forced to really trim their budgets. They were forced to really look at all their expenses and to find all the efficiencies they could in order to continue to make a profit or to minimize and allow them to get over this hump.

I would just ask my hon. friend to talk a little bit about this operating review and that governments, the federal government as well the provincial governments, have a responsibility to do the exact same thing that we asked small business to do.

• (1225)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I would similarly congratulate my hon. colleague on his re-election to this House.

Canadians expect their government to operate similarly to the way households operate or the way small businesses operate. One must operate within one's means. One cannot structurally spend more than one takes in, whether it is a family with a wage earner or a business with revenue.

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It is fine to incur deficits over the short-term. Certainly, given the economic downturn, we incurred some temporary stimulus funding deficits to kickstart the Canadian economy. However, that is not a long-term plan.

Canadians expect their government to act similarly to small business or families, to live within their means and to live within balanced budgets. That is the key to economic prosperity over the long-term.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege for me to rise in the House today to speak to our government's budget 2011.

[*Translation*]

Since this is my first speech in the 41st Parliament, I would like to thank the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for the support they have shown me over the past five years and for the trust they placed in me by re-electing me on May 2. It is a great honour and a great pleasure to be their member of Parliament, and I will do my very best to stand up for their interests here in the House and within the government.

[*English*]

Regarding the budget, I would like to begin by noting the tremendous support we received from Canadians for our government's low tax plan that focuses on protecting existing jobs, creating new jobs, securing Canada's recovery from the global economic recession, and improving the well-being of Canadians over the long-term.

All around us we see the signs of economic recovery, yet our country is still at risk. This is why our government has once again brought Canadians a budget that protects and creates jobs while promoting strong, sustained and balanced growth.

[*Translation*]

The recent election gave Canadians the opportunity to voice their concerns. The priorities of the residents of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell are job creation, strong economic leadership as well as financial support for seniors, farmers, families and firefighters. I am pleased that the budget addresses all of these issues. I listened carefully to the people of my riding and I am happy that the budget proposes initiatives that will address their concerns.

[*English*]

Canadians are encouraged by the economic recovery we have experienced here in Canada, and by the strategies taken by our Conservative government to reduce spending and taxes.

We made a number of promises during the election and we are keeping these promises. For example, the newest measure in the budget, the four year phase-out of the taxpayer subsidy for political parties, will save taxpayers over \$27 million per year.

We said we would cut this subsidy and we are cutting it. The winner is the taxpayer.

*The Budget**[Translation]*

Also, our government plans to cut the deficit by almost two-thirds by 2013. The deficit will continue to decline to just \$0.5 billion by 2015. Eliminating the deficit will allow us to continue paying down the debt and investing in the priorities of Canadians.

[English]

This will mean even lower taxes for families and a decline of our national debt by 2016.

The International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada will be one of only two group of seven countries expected to return to budget balance by 2016. We said that we would eliminate the deficit and eliminate it we will.

[Translation]

In my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, people have benefited significantly from the first phases of Canada's economic action plan. Since 2006, I have had the pleasure of announcing more than \$130 million in federal government investments to improve our infrastructure, strengthen the local economy and help community development.

● (1230)

[English]

This level of federal investment in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is unprecedented and has never been seen before. This funding has enabled us to preserve and develop our cultural heritages, and helped support our local businesses. That is only the beginning.

Budget 2011 is focused on creating jobs. That is particularly important in a rural riding such as mine. If we want people to move their families into rural areas, we must ensure that there are jobs there for them. The job creators are businesses. During the election we said that we would take measures to keep business taxes low and to stimulate job growth. That is exactly what we are doing.

In particular, there are tax measures to encourage and financially reward small businesses that create new jobs. These measures will help our economy to grow and will add jobs to the over 540,000 new jobs already created since July 2009.

[Translation]

I spoke about benefits for firefighters, seniors and families. Our budget provides for specific measures to help these important groups in our community.

In my riding, there are many volunteer firefighters. Rural communities such as the ones I represent need volunteer firefighters. These men and women have taken on the responsibility of protecting the members of our communities and even risk their lives for others. It is important to recognize that firefighters and their families make huge sacrifices.

[English]

I am very proud that our budget contains a significant tax deduction for our volunteer firefighters. Our Conservative government is the first federal government to have included such a measure in its budget. We said we would deliver strong financial support to

recognize the critical work done by our volunteer firefighters and that is what we are doing.

Like every riding across Canada, the strength of my riding rests with its families. With the rising costs of living it becomes increasingly difficult for parents to afford extracurricular activities that will help their children develop their creativity. We had already delivered a tax credit to support physical fitness among youth. However, I wanted to see a tax credit to encourage an appreciation of the arts among our youth.

[Translation]

My riding in particular has a unique culture, one based on the francophone culture, dance and traditional music, as evidenced by the large number of youth who participate in the Glengarry Highland Games every year. The arts play a unifying role in the community. The arts enrich our children's lives and prepare them to become leaders in society, a fact supported by the government through the children's arts tax credit.

[English]

The budget also provides good news for seniors. I have visited with seniors across Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, particularly during this past election. I know of their important contributions to our communities and to our country. However, these are difficult times. As I mentioned earlier, the cost of living is increasing.

[Translation]

The cost of gas, electricity and food has increased, making it difficult for seniors, many of whom are on a fixed income, to make ends meet. I am pleased that the budget provides for a substantial increase in the guaranteed income supplement. An additional \$600 per year will be paid to single seniors and \$840 to couples. This is the third increase by the Conservatives for seniors and, it should be mentioned, the largest increase in the guaranteed income supplement in the past 25 years.

Agriculture is another very important issue that affects the well-being of my riding's residents. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, I worked closely with the farmers in my riding and throughout Canada. I am very honoured that the Prime Minister has again entrusted me with this very important role, and I would like all farmers to know that I will work closely with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and my colleagues to ensure that their interests are well represented in this government.

[English]

I believe we have done excellent work over the past five years. Farmers are doing better now than they have in a very long time. This is under a Conservative government and Conservative agricultural policies.

As we move forward in 2011, I will continue to seek input from the farmers of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and across Canada on what our future agricultural priorities should be. It is clear that we have tabled a budget that is good news for Canadians and Canada.

• (1235)

[Translation]

The 2011 budget was presented to Canadians in March, before the last election, and was one that they liked. We based our election campaign on this budget and Canadians evidently approved. On May 2, Canadians elected a strong, stable, majority Conservative government. I invite my colleagues opposite to support budget 2011, as Canadians have done.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on being re-elected. He spoke very compassionately about seniors and I want to bring up the issue of Alzheimer's disease and, more broadly, dementia, which really is the most significant critical health care issue we face.

Today, some 500,000 Canadians live with some form of dementia and the terrible impact of the illness on families is profound. The current cost is \$15 billion and in 30 years we will be looking at a cost of \$153 billion. I recognize there is money for neurological disorders in the budget, but I will ask a very specific question.

Where is the national or federal strategy to cope with the rising tide of dementia and why do existing federal programs, research funding, support and income assistance pale in comparison to the enormous and rapidly escalating health, economic and social impacts of this disease?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised a very important point. This is something we take seriously in terms of medicare and medical services delivered throughout Canada.

As my colleague knows, health falls predominantly under the responsibility of the provinces across Canada, but we as a Conservative government have announced our solid commitment to ensure that the provinces have the resources necessary to deliver health care, including the matter of which the member spoke. She quite rightly pointed out that we have addressed neurological disorders. We also work very closely with the provinces and groups that speak to us about particular plans and strategies to address these types of conditions.

I must enunciate that we did announce that we would continue to increase federal transfers to the provinces for health care to help situations as the member mentioned.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on being re-elected for the third time in the House and for his hard work in the agricultural file. In my riding a very important sector is the agriculture community. He talked about seniors, small business, farmers, families, firefighters, and the list goes on. This is a comprehensive budget.

Would the hon. member expand a little more on the impact the budget will have on our agricultural community as we also help to expand additional markets to ensure we have a strong, stable supply of healthy foods not only nationally but around the world?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for highlighting agriculture and the importance it plays not only in my riding but many ridings across Canada.

The Budget

Our farmers are the salt of the earth. They work hard, pay their taxes and there are conditions under which they can succeed. As I mentioned in my speech, farmers are doing better now than they have in a very long time and that is thanks to the hard work of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and all colleagues in Parliament.

I was happy to see in the Speech from the Throne that our government has committed to increase farmers' access to international markets. When our farmers are able to sell their products into a larger international market, that is better for farmers. We also mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that we would defend supply management, while opening international markets to our farmers.

These two initiatives, coupled with all of the programming for farmers, will ensure that our farmers succeed in the future.

• (1240)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

I will start, Mr. Speaker, by congratulating you on your election. I also want to congratulate all my colleagues, members of the House, for their election to represent Canadians.

At this time I want to acknowledge and thank my family. My father, who is no longer with us, was one of my true mentors. I am always grateful for the values and work ethic he instilled in me. I thank my mom, brothers, extended family, of course, my partner, Steve, my two wonderful children and my inspiration to run in the last election, my three beautiful grandchildren, Jacob, Jessica and Emily. It is for their sakes that I chose to make this commitment. I know we have to build the kind of Canada in which our children and grandchildren can flourish.

What an honour it is today for me to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Newton—North Delta. Above all, I want to thank my constituents for the confidence they have placed in me. I will put their priorities front and centre every day.

I also want to acknowledge Sukh Dhaliwal for his five years of service to Newton—North Delta. We have different ideas about the country we want to build, but our commitment to social service is constant.

Communities like mine did not just choose a new member of Parliament on May 2, they sent a powerful message to Ottawa. We do not have to put up with the same old ways. Change is possible, we can choose something better, and that is exactly what they did. Four and a half million Canadians from every region rallied behind our New Democrat vision for a better Canada, where families come first and no one is left behind.

The Budget

I humbly accept the mandate my constituents have given me. I accept their mandate to put families at the front of the line, ahead of the profitable banks, ahead of the big polluters and ahead of companies shipping good Canadian jobs out of the country. I accept their mandate to work constructively with all members of the House to get practical results. The challenges we highlighted in this election are very real for citizens in my community.

I have spoken with families that are being squeezed between caring for their children and caring for their elderly parents. They have seen their senior parents struggle to get by on a fixed income and have had to watch the very people who built our country struggle to meet their health care needs and other economic needs.

I have heard from students who are not only worried about the size of the debt they will have upon graduation, but are also worried that there will not be enough fair-paying jobs to help them get rid of the debt once they are employed. For example, when a young woman I met told me the size of her student debt, I was absolutely flabbergasted, and this is not a unique story. Her debt was higher than the mortgage I took out to buy my first house. That is the kind of struggle our young people face today.

I have talked with families that are seriously concerned that the pensions they have been paying into all their working lives may now be at risk due to privatization and the volatility of the stock market. We have all seen what happened south of the border.

Many of my constituents are puzzled when they see raw logs shipped out of our country, while sawmill jobs in Canada remain dormant. Whole communities are decimated. One only has to go through parts of B.C. to see this. However, this is not unique to B.C. I have seen these former well-paid mill workers now struggling to get by, the lucky ones, while working two or three part-time, low-paying jobs.

Almost all of my constituents, no matter their income, gender or ethnic background, want to see a strong, publicly funded health system in Canada. They want to see it enhanced. They do not want to see it privatized or rationed.

We have all heard about the Tim Hortons-style health care in British Columbia that forces people to be treated in a coffee shop rather than a hospital. Together, every one of us in the House must protect and improve a universal health care system, a gift from Tommy Douglas and other pioneers.

• (1245)

People question why there is a shortage of doctors, while foreign trained doctors and health care professionals are forced to drive taxicabs for a living because the government appears powerless to integrate them into our medical system. I travelled in a cab with a doctor from another country who, while there, was teaching in a hospital. He could not understand why after five years he still could not get a placement to get his credentials in Canada.

I have talked to young working families who are finding it difficult, almost impossible, to balance their cost of living, runaway gas prices, the cost of housing, the cost of child care, care for their aging parents and service their huge student debts. Most are frustrated. Many have lost hope. Almost half have become cynical of government. They see government as representing the interests of

big banks and big corporations and not representing their family interests. They cannot understand the continued tax breaks to big banks and oil companies, while they are losing jobs in those sectors.

Families in my riding cannot understand why they have to wait from 12 to 15 years to bring grandparents and parents into our country. They are worried that the government has not made those kinds of commitments to improve family reunification.

That is why the people of Newton—North Delta voted for change. I promise them that I will fight for that change every day and I will fight for their interests. I look forward to working with all members of the House on practical solutions that will make a difference in Newton—North Delta.

I trust that the Prime Minister will respect the mandate our team brings in to Parliament. Four and a half million Canadians voted New Democrat and they know exactly what they voted for. They voted to strengthen public pensions. They voted to improve public health care. They voted to help families make ends meet. They voted to grow our economy with new jobs and opportunities.

Canadians elected our most unified opposition in 31 years, 103 committed New Democrats from every region of the country, the strongest Quebec federalist result in a generation, with the largest percentage of women in Canada history, with the largest percentage of young people under 30 years of age, with representation from first nations and many of the cultural communities that make Canada so diverse and so strong. This is an official opposition that knows where it stands. Our mandate is crystal clear. We will put forward practical solutions for families. We will oppose the government when it is off-track. However, we will work together when we can get constructive results.

I am honoured to serve the people of Newton—North Delta and I am honoured to serve with every member of the House. We will each bring different skills and priorities into this place and different ideas about what our country can be, but we can all choose to work together constructively, with respect for each other and for the people who sent us here. That is how my parents taught me to move in this world. It is certainly the example I want to cite, not only for the children I have taught, but for my own children and grandchildren. I will bring my best here every day.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments. The member brought up a lot of issues that are under provincial jurisdiction, issues like tuition rates and so forth. Perhaps she might want to take them up with her provincial representatives. These are set by provincial jurisdictions.

I heard something about the delivery of health care in British Columbia, again a provincial matter. She well knows that our government has increased the health transfers year over year, 6% per year compounded since 2006. We have also introduced new spending for things like Health Infoway and so forth. We have also provided additional funds to reduce wait times. All of these are critical things.

The NDP constantly comes out against businesses that seem to be successful in Canada. I really do not understand the attacks on Canadian industries, whether they are in the energy sector or financial sector, two particularly strong sectors in Canada that drive a much larger economy. We hear a lot about breaks being given to these corporations.

Could the hon. member indicate whether she is aware of how many billions of dollars in taxes that these companies contribute to Canada's tax system and how many jobs that these sectors provide for Canadians? Is she aware of how much in taxes that generates for the country and the contributions they make toward employment insurance and CPP? I am sure the member, having come out against these two important sectors, would be aware of those numbers.

• (1250)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely aware that education is a provincial issue. However, we all know the reason the fees are going up is that the provinces are in need of transfer funds from the federal government. It is when those transfer funds are increased that the provinces, together with the federal government, can help to keep a cap on tuition fees. Tuition fees are out of control. I have a young son who is going through university right now. I can tell members that the cost of textbooks is just horrendous. I can afford to support him but many parents cannot.

As for health care, it is exactly the same. We know that the health care accord is coming up for negotiations. However, it is also the transfer of funds from the federal government that helps to support the health care system in our provinces. We need to look at that and we need to ensure that we have systems in place that will stop the creeping of privatization into our health care system.

As far as tax breaks for corporations, the NDP's position has been very clear. We believe that we need to be competitive in our tax breaks but that the tax breaks need to go to smaller and middle-sized businesses because they are the ones that grow jobs that stay in our communities.

I have met with many people who have been laid off in the banking sector, despite the fact that we have given it billions of dollars. I ask that I be given evidence that the banking sector has grown jobs.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the House.

I believe that health care will be one of the defining issues of the next four years. My constituents, like those across the country, want their health care system to be there when families need it most.

We have heard from the Conservatives that they are taking action and making way on wait times but if we actually look at a 2011 study from the Canadians Institutes of Health, it shows that wait

times vary widely across provinces. If we look at cataract or knee surgeries, many patients wait longer than the recommended limit.

I wonder if the member would comment on hospital wait times?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I also congratulate the member on her election.

I will tell members a bit about my riding. We have one hospital in the huge municipality of Surrey. The waiting lists are absolutely huge in that riding. Even though we have had a bit of an investment in the infrastructure, what we are finding in our hospital in Surrey is that there is a shortage of professionals. There is a shortage of doctors and nurses. My constituents wait longer than their Vancouver counterparts to get normal surgical procedures. If people need knee surgery, they can go to Vancouver and get it done in about a third of the time than the people can in Surrey. The discrepancy is huge and it needs to be addressed by improving it for everyone.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in this House and it is a great honour for me to do so on behalf of my constituents, the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval.

I first want to thank my entire team who helped me get here today, especially my spouse, Didier Sacy, who helped me a lot during my campaign. I also want to thank the voters of my riding, which had been Liberal since 1962, for the confidence they placed in me on May 2. It was difficult for some voters, but they voted for change.

The voters in my riding wanted not only a new MP, but also change. They had had enough of the old ways of governing, the decisions that did not represent their interests and values, and the growing cynicism. The voters in my riding placed their confidence in me on May 2, and I and the entire New Democratic Party must respect that.

I will start by making families a priority above the most profitable banks and the interests of polluters, but especially above companies that send our jobs overseas. Families are the future. Families will provide us with the desired population pyramid, a demographic situation that will allow us to help our seniors, offer health care to everyone and live on a healthy planet.

Families should be the first people we help and encourage, starting with our seniors, those who worked their entire lives, contributed to our economy and built the society we live in today. I have spoken with Nortel retirees, many of whom live in my riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. They lose sleep at night because they are worried about their income. Scandals like the one at Nortel were permitted by previous governments. We have to commit to amending federal bankruptcy legislation to ensure that pensioners and long-term disability recipients are at the top of the list of creditors when employers are placed under court protection or declare bankruptcy. Nothing in the budget suggests that the government will provide them with any help. The cost of living, the increased cost of food, housing and gas is becoming a burden for families. We absolutely must help them.

The Budget

In my riding, voters have another concern, namely, the very small place that the Conservative budget has given to the development of the green economy. During the election campaign, the Conservative candidate for Lac-Saint-Louis, a former senator and now a senator once again, promised major federal investments in a new rail line between the West Island of Montreal—Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport—and downtown Montreal. This line would serve as a commuter train and a quick connection for visitors to our great city. It is one of the most important and popular issues for the voters in my riding and in west Montreal.

This project, which has been the subject of discussion for years, would have a very positive impact on the economy, employment, the environment and the daily lives of thousands of workers, students and travellers. However, the budget proposed by the Conservatives does not include a single penny for this project, despite the candidate's promises. The senator received a very nice gift following the election, but there are no gifts in this budget for the 500,000 residents of west Montreal who have been waiting for a long time for an effective transportation service that will help them reduce the amount of pollution they are producing and take them to downtown Montreal where most activities take place.

Many residents of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing the major polluters instead of supporting a green economy. My constituents want assurances that their environment will be protected. They want the government to take measures to bring people together; not to divide them.

I hope I can count on the co-operation of all members of the House to adopt practical solutions that will make a real difference in the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and in Dorval. I am counting on our Prime Minister to respect the mandate that was given to him and I am counting on our team to allow us to accomplish our work in Parliament. It would not be fair if the ridings represented by Conservatives received more projects than the others. The people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval hope to receive the same favours as the rest of Canada.

On May 2, the voters of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine were among the 4.5 million Canadians who voted for change, who voted to strengthen public pension plans, improve health care, help families make ends meet and ensure that our economy offers new jobs and new opportunities. They voted for a better Canada, with fewer scandals and injustices. By voting for change, Canadians have voted in the most united official opposition in the last 31 years. We have 103 members from across the country: women, young adults and members of the cultural communities that help strengthen Canada. It is a heterogeneous official opposition that reflects the faces of Canada.

• (1255)

I am very honoured to have been chosen by the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval. I am also honoured to have the opportunity to work with all the members of this House. Despite a few differences, we can work together for the good of Canadians, work together constructively as we respect others and their ideas. That is how I will work. I will do my very best every day to represent my riding as well as I can.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also want to welcome the hon. member who gave her first speech.

We have heard the NDP talk at length about the problems with health care and waiting lists, whether in emergency rooms or for surgery. The NDP also talked about this during the election campaign.

The hon. member says she wants to work with all the hon. members of this House on improving life for the general public. Can she tell me what tangible ideas she and her party have that will improve the health care system in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada? I do not need to tell the hon. member that health is an exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces.

The hon. member and the NDP are saying that we must help improve health care. How can the federal Parliament get involved in these matters in any tangible way when it is the provinces, Quebec in my case, that have the means—or should have the means—to ensure that health care is improved?

• (1300)

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I would also like to congratulate him on his election.

I believe that my colleague already answered this question. Federal transfers help hospitals. In my riding, one hospital serves all the constituents. The waiting lists are appalling. There is also a new expansion project for the McGill University Health Centre. Consequently, more doctors will want to work at a new centre with more advanced technology. It is a great benefit for the people of my riding.

To provide tangible assistance to the provinces, we can give them money to help doctors become specialists, to speed up the process for recognizing the foreign credentials of family doctors so they can practice sooner, and we can ensure that there are better working conditions for hospital staff. We know that there is a brain drain to the United States. This problem is caused by the fact that working conditions in Canada are not good enough. I believe that we must work with the provinces to improve working conditions. Thus, we would have more doctors and more adequate health care for everyone.

[English]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be engaging in this debate on budget 2011. I would first like to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Northeast.

The Budget

This budget was first introduced on March 23 in the 40th Parliament. We all know what happened at that time. The opposition parties avoided a vote on the budget by forcing an unwanted election, but it turns out it was an election that reshaped the political landscape. It proved to be politically costly for two of the three leaders. Mr. Ignatieff of course and Mr. Duceppe not only lost their own seats, but one lost official party status and the other party returned with a severely diminished caucus.

On May 2, Canadians returned to the 41st Parliament with a solid, stable, national Conservative government and an NDP official opposition. It was a surprise to some people. However, I find it interesting that in evaluating the electoral prospects the high school students apparently had it figured out before the pundits did. They selected a Conservative majority government with an NDP official opposition.

Allow me to express my congratulations to you as Assistant Deputy Speaker, to the Speaker and to the other Assistant Deputy Speaker, as well as to the Deputy Speaker on their elections and appointments.

I would also like to congratulate all of the members who returned to this House. It is an honour for them to represent the ridings that they come from.

As well, I would like to thank the electors in Nanaimo—Alberni for returning me for the fifth time to this 41st Parliament.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize my campaign manager and campaign team who worked diligently and my EDA board.

At our recent policy convention there were five resolutions from Nanaimo—Alberni brought up for discussion and two that actually passed into policy. There were very enthusiastic supporters from Nanaimo—Alberni. I thank them all for their participation in the process.

One thing that we heard from the caucus members, cabinet ministers and party activists at the convention that we took to heart is that we all have an obligation to engage our neighbours, to listen, to take the pulse of our communities and to stay in tune with what is happening in our communities. We are facing unprecedented change, not only in Canada but around the world and it will be incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we stay in tune with how these impacts are affecting our communities. I thank all of those folks who were responsible for that.

One other person I must thank is my wife of some 20 years now. These last 11 years in Parliament have been a big challenge for someone from the west coast who is travelling back and forth. We are away a lot from the island of paradise that we live on. Helen has stood by me faithfully all of the years I have been in Parliament. All members would know the level of stress that the commitment to our job can put on our families. I thank Helen for standing with me, for without her it would not have been possible.

This budget was well received on March 23. In fact, it was so well received that the finance minister thought he would introduce it again and on June 6 that is what he did.

There are many measures in the budget that we can discuss and that have been discussed today. There will be more to discuss as the debate continues.

One of the measures I want to highlight is the one involving seniors. Since coming to Parliament we have reduced the tax burden on seniors significantly. Over \$2.3 billion has been given in annual tax relief since 2006 with the various measures that we have introduced taking some 85,000 seniors off the tax rolls. That includes pension income splitting, increasing the age credit amount by \$1,000 twice for a total of \$2,000 and doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000. All of these measures together, along with increasing the guaranteed income supplement, are extremely important in lowering the tax burden on seniors.

I have heard some members say that the \$600 a year for singles and the \$840 for a married couple of the lowest income seniors amounts to nothing. I think they are remiss in not reflecting on the cumulative effect in shifting the tax burden away from seniors and doing our best to help our most vulnerable seniors.

• (1305)

There are many measures in the budget: a new children's arts tax credit of up to \$500, a new family caregiver tax credit, a volunteer firefighters tax credit and extending the eco-energy retrofit. All of these are important for our communities. All of these benefit our communities. In some sectors of the community it takes the burden off people who contribute in a big way, like our volunteers firefighters.

I want to turn the children's fitness tax credit which was introduced earlier. It is only a \$500 measure to help encourage people to engage their children in physical fitness. Many experts are concerned about the declining health of Canadians and we have to start with the children. It is a small measure, but it is a good measure. As we get to balanced budgets in the next few years, reducing that deficit year by year, we have a plan that is working. We will extend that measure, doubling it for children and extending it to adults as well.

I want to comment on that briefly. As a health professional for many years and a chiropractor for 24 years, a body man, I want to remind members that the human body has some 80 trillion to 100 trillion cells, some 200 different cell types and 25,000 miles of blood vessels. These cells do not last an entire lifetime. They are being replaced on a continual basis. There is some speculation. The exception is the nervous system, which is actually original equipment. Most of that is here for life and we had better protect it. We are replacing cells on a daily basis. Every 7 to 10 years, every bone cell is replaced.

This is relevant to the budget. Hon. members should be listening. They will enjoy this. When my wife and I are on the cycle path, when we are exercising, pushing the limits and pushing our bodies, we get a little tired sometimes. I encourage her by saying that it is tomorrow's body we are pushing for. It is today's activities that actually set the template for tomorrow's body.

The Budget

In a similar manner the nutrition, the food we eat contributes to the body we are building for tomorrow. I hope as we move forward and as we are looking for sustainable solutions to our health care challenges that there will be more emphasis on wellness initiatives, more things that encourage positive health management on a personal health level and more incentives to promote a disease prevention strategy.

There are many measures in the budget to help people. I want to remind people that a couple of years ago in 2006, we hit an economic tsunami, a worldwide economic downturn. We had to act quickly, and indeed, that is what we did. We brought in some \$60 billion in stimulus measures, outreach measures to help workers displaced, created incentives like job-sharing and a whole range of initiatives to help our communities. Part of that was the economic stimulus measures that brought jobs through some 25,000 projects across the country. On Vancouver Island many projects benefited our community. All of these projects helped to keep people employed during that difficult time.

Cumulatively, we have created over 540,000 jobs, all important, to keep people employed and keep our communities working. There was the home renovation tax credit during that phase that kept people working. In this budget we have the very popular eco-energy retrofit program extended that will encourage positive behaviour by encouraging people to invest in energy efficiencies for their homes: the windows, the doors, the insulation, the kinds of projects that keep people working in our community and contribute to energy savings in the community as well.

There is a whole range of issues that we have not addressed and I am down to my last minute, but there are positive measures for our small businesses with a hiring credit of up to \$1,000 to encourage more hiring. There is support for youth entrepreneurs of some \$20 million. We are reducing red tape. We are investing in clean energy technology and innovation and we are legislating the permanent gas tax funding for municipalities at some \$2 billion a year. That is so important to our communities, many of which have infrastructure deficits and are counting on that money to help refurbish the infrastructure in our municipalities.

For all these reasons I encourage our colleagues to stand with us and support the budget. Let us work together and keep our country strong as we move forward, keep Canada's economy the best in the world. Let us develop all the potential we can in this country as we move ahead.

• (1310)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague's comments. Although normally members would expect me to viciously oppose the government's budget, I want to start in a more conciliatory tone since we are in a new session of Parliament.

Let me start by saying that the one part of the budget I was happy to see was, of course, the return of the eco-energy retrofit program for homes. That \$400 million is desperately needed in our communities. However, I have to ask the government why this program was brought back for only one year.

This program is good for homeowners, the environment, jobs and we also know that it is good for the government because for every \$1

that the government pays in incentives, families actually spend \$10 and generate twice as much in tax revenue. This program really is a win-win.

I was really surprised to see in *The Hamilton Spectator* this morning, and frankly saddened, that the member for Burlington said:

They (energy advisers) made a choice. That's their industry and career choice that they've made. Whether we have a government program that keeps them in business or not is not my call—

That is really regrettable because the question remains: Why is this program in place for just one year?

The government pulled the plug on this program in 2006. It was a program that worked well. People clamoured for it to be renewed. Now we have the money, but it is being put on a very short leash. What if there is money left over at the end of the year without programs having actually been implemented effectively? I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for her conciliatory tone and I congratulate her on her re-election.

We all have an obligation to work together in the House to move ahead. There is a difference between permanent measures and those that are meant to stimulate activity. The member is aware that we are running a deficit and were severely criticized for that. When we were coming up with the economic action plan, opposition parties were annoyed that we were not operating fast enough and wanted us to spend more, but we have an obligation to balance our budget.

This year, as we are working toward a balanced budget without upsetting our economy, we are projecting a deficit of some \$32 billion. It will be down to about \$19.4 billion next year, \$9.4 billion the year after that and then moving to a small surplus in the following year.

We have an opportunity in next year's budget, if we need further stimulus, to move ahead with a program. In the meantime, we are hoping as many Canadians as possible will take advantage of it this year to keep people working and move ahead with energy efficiency in their homes. It is a well-appreciated program that is supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

• (1315)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, a fellow classmate from the class of 2000. Some in the House say that was probably one of the strongest contingents of members of Parliament who arrived in the House for many years.

The Budget

In response to the last question, he talked about the eco-energy tax deduction. Any time the government puts forward a tax deduction, it is to initiate and improve behaviour in a particular area and we have seen the outcome through the tax deduction for the retrofits.

He talked about the tax credit for sport. If we look at the participation rates in the country over the last 10 years, they are fairly gradual and we can pretty much determine that each year they grow by so much. This was introduced in 2006 and there was no discernible increase in participation rates in 2007, 2008 or 2009. It remained the same.

The one time there was a big spike was in 2003 following the gold medal performance of the women's hockey team in Salt Lake City. Does he see that sometimes targeted investments in leadership, facilities, coaching, those types of things, have even more impact than a mere tax deduction?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member acknowledging our election back in the year 2000. There are few of us left from that particular class. We all have a certain measure of camaraderie having survived a few elections to remain in the House and the challenges that represents.

I know the member is a very enthusiastic sports promoter. We put a lot of money into the Olympics. That motivated a lot of Canadians. It is great to see Canadians from coast to coast taking an interest, the young girls out playing soccer and so many sports activities. We are trying to broaden that.

I appreciate the member's comment. There is more than one way to achieve the objectives but we think they have a cumulative effect in encouraging Canadians to become physically active. I thank him for drawing that to our attention.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan to keep taxes low and to create jobs and growth. This is a budget that is truly good for all Canadians from a government that is here for all Canadians.

Before I begin, I would first like to thank my wife, Neetu, our children, Jatin, Chetan and Arisha, and, of course, our campaign team and all of those friends and constituents who supported me in my election to serve as a member of Parliament for Calgary Northeast.

It was not our choice that Canada was swept into global economic crisis but we had learned from past events. Our Conservative government acted quickly and boldly with unprecedented fiscal stimulus. Our decisive actions then is the reason for our favourable position now.

Canada has the highest employment growth among the G7 nations. In fact, Canada's employment rate is higher today than it was before the global recession began. Canada has created nearly 560,000 net new jobs since July 2009. In May 2011 alone, Canada created over 22,000 new jobs.

That is all good news but I want to caution anyone who thinks we are completely out of the woods. Despite our stimulus measures, our strong banking sector and the hard-working Canadian public, we

must not become complacent. Global economic forces outside our control remain uncertain and we need to keep our guard up.

The budget gives more exactly where we need it the most. It supports job creation, families and communities, invests in innovation, education and training, and preserves Canada's fiscal advantage.

Our government understands that it takes a low tax environment to allow businesses to thrive. Our government is providing a temporary hiring credit for small businesses to encourage additional hiring. We are expanding the work sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers to help keep people in the workforce.

We also understand that investing in technology not only creates jobs today but saves us money in the future. Energy costs are one of the fastest rising costs for Canadians and Canadian households. That is why our government is renewing the \$100 million investment over two years for research and development on clean energy and energy efficiency.

We are also extending the popular eco-energy home retrofit program to make our homes more energy efficient. This program also has real benefits for businesses in my riding. Lux Window and Glass is a multi-generational family-owned business in Calgary Northeast that supplies windows and doors to home builders and renovators.

The president of the company, John Petrillo, told me that in 2009, when we established the eco-energy home retrofit program, his company saw an outstanding number of customers looking to renovate. It was thanks to our 15% tax rebate. With regard to the extension of the program in this budget, Mr. Petrillo said, "The eco-energy retrofit program would help Lux Windows to keep over 120 plant employees and 10 installation crews employed".

Another business, the North West Group, located in my riding, specializes in the generation of high quality digitalized geo-spatial mapping information for clients across all sectors. Tim Crago, the vice-president, had this to say about our government's low tax plan:

Creating a competitive, low tax framework for businesses in Canada creates a highly attractive environment not just for big firms, but small and medium sized companies like the North West Group in which to invest and grow.

On this budget, Mr. Crago said:

We are also pleased to see that Budget 2011 reaffirms that the Government of Canada will be giving priority to its Digital Economy Strategy, to make Canada a leader in the creation, adoption and use of digital technologies and content.

• (1320)

However, those are not the only success stories in my riding of Calgary Northeast:

The Budget

Burhan Khan, born in Pakistan, moved to Canada in 1986, an MBA and registered public accountant in business for 20 years, running his BK accounting firm in my riding with a team of five employees, said, “This budget is a small-business friendly and great for young and eager entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and create jobs for the good of Canada. The low tax climate also gives me the flexibility to hire and train more apprentice workers, which makes me very proud as a Canadian of Pakistan origin”.

It is clear that our Conservative government has a plan and the plan is working to keep taxes low and create jobs and growth.

The government is also solidifying Canada's reputation as a great place to invest and to do business. In fact, it was under this government that Tim Hortons decided to move its corporate headquarters back to Canada to reap the benefits of our new low tax environment. Certainly Tim Hortons serves as a popular icon for all Canadians, from Calgary Northeast to Kandahar. We are glad to have it back.

We want all Canadians to enjoy a high standard of living. We are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old security. We are providing new top up benefit of \$600 annually for individual seniors and up to \$840 annually for couples. This will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 Canadian seniors, many of them from Calgary Northeast.

This Conservative government understands that more families are sacrificing to take care of their ailing loved ones inside their home. That is why we have introduced a family caregiver tax credit and an enhanced medical expense tax credit that removes the limit on eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a dependent relative.

We are also providing a new children's art tax credit to support Canadian families as they pursue the arts.

We are the first Canadian government to provide a volunteer firefighter tax credit for those who serve their communities and put themselves in harm's way.

Our government is investing in its greatest assets: its people. We are expanding eligibility for Canada student loans and grant programs for full and part-time post-secondary students. We are also helping apprentices enter into the trades by making their examination fees eligible for the tuition tax credit. We are investing in innovation, education and training to keep Canada on the leading edge.

We may not have all our wishes fulfilled in this budget but, just as families balance their budgets at the kitchen table, Canadians expect the government to balance its books.

Our government has committed to returning to surplus by 2015-16 and we are on track to achieving this, without raising taxes, without cutting funding to seniors, families or the unemployed, and without cutting transfers for health care and social services, all under a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government.

• (1325)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is far too good a member of Parliament to actually

believe the talking points that he was sent in here to read today. The arguments are full of holes and lack any empirical evidence to back up the claims that he is making regarding, especially, the tax credits.

I would say, by way of a preface to my question, that we are in the process of doing an analysis, perhaps the first in-depth analysis, of many of the tiny incremental tax credits that the Conservatives have offered Canadians over the last two or even three budgets. We are breaking this down by quintile to see who is actually availing themselves of the tax credits being offered.

What we are finding, and it is not ready for publication yet because it is not quite finished, is that the tax credits that are targeted for the sports tax credit or the children's art and music tax credit, for instance, will probably not help many poor kids participate in sports who would not otherwise be participating or participate in music, dance, theatre or art who would not otherwise be participating. It is those who are availing themselves of it who are already participating in that program.

If we take the cumulative total of all the small incremented, badly targeted tax breaks of the past three, four or five budgets, they do not add up to the untargeted scattergun \$6 billion corporate tax cut, explain the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for touching on the issues tax credits or tax cuts.

Let us go back to our government's record. Our government's record shows that when we talked about the tax cuts we did cut the taxes. We cut the GST from 7% to 6% and then to 5%. As I mentioned in my budget speech, we may not be able to fulfill all our visions in this budget but we started addressing the issues. We started addressing the matters that concerned Canadians, whether they are credits or tax cuts. This budget is a re-introduction of the budget presented and tabled in March 2011. Canadians were told before they voted for us that this budget would be re-introduced and it was accepted by Canadians on the whole.

• (1330)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Calgary Northeast on his reelection here.

I will blend the question that I posed to the member from Nanaimo—Alberni, along with the comments made by the hon. colleague from Winnipeg Centre, which is that the targeting of certain tax provisions is not making a lot of sense. Whether my three boys played hockey or took part in soccer was a decision made between my wife and I at the kitchen table. We did not sit down and say that we might save \$70 this year because the government is giving us \$70 back.

I am sure my accountant had access to those credits, but it is a loss to the treasury if there is not some kind of discernable positive change in behaviour. What we did not see was any increase in participation rates in this country because of that tax rate.

Are we targeting youth activity or are we targeting soccer moms?

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Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his congratulations and wish him the same.

On the issue of taxes, I have spoken with many constituents in Calgary Northeast and I have not found one family that is not happy with the e tax credits introduced by our government. In fact, families are encouraged and now they are talking about putting their children in the arts. They want their children to go to gyms and all those things. They are fully supportive of this budget and they are fully concerned about the questions raised in this House of Commons by the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I would just like to remind all hon. members that the Chair appreciates your co-operation in the question and answer period. When there are 10-minute speeches, there are 5 minutes for questions and answers and we try to get two questions and two answers, so a bit more than a minute per person. However, in order to ensure that all hon. members have the opportunity to participate, I would ask for your co-operation at that time.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

It is a great pleasure to be back in the House. I want to thank the people of Cape Breton—Canso for expressing their confidence in me once again. The 41st Parliament will be my fifth Parliament, and it continues to be an honour and privilege to be representing them here in Ottawa.

Some members have been to my riding in the past. The rugged coastlines and landscapes are spectacular. It is a part of the world that is rich in culture. I encourage all members of the House if they have not been there yet and are still working on summer vacation plans to take a trip to Cape Breton or the northeastern shore of Nova Scotia through Guysborough and Canso. I think tickets are still available for the Stan Rogers Folk Festival. During lobster season and crab season it is a great place in Canada to visit.

I should add that one does not succeed unless there is a group of people around one who wants one to be successful. Each of us is here because there was a group of people who believed in him or her. In my case, I have had campaign workers who have put in countless hours, pounding in signs, making phone calls, writing cheques and going door to door. We are here because of them.

Then there is family support. I was fortunate to have my sister, Kim Bedeck, act as my campaign manager this time around, and she did a tremendous job. My wife, Lynn, and my three boys, Mitch, Scott and Brad, put up signs and then the sign team would fix them up as well. Everyone who is here does it with a great deal of family and other support from those who believe in them. I am fortunate and am thankful for everyone's efforts.

Much has been said about past Parliaments and the fact that, quite often, the decorum here in the House has been ultra-aggressive or very adversarial. There is a focus now and a commitment to making sure that we try to be a little less aggressive in our debate and throughout question period. It is in that spirit today that I will be making my points.

In speaking to the budget, I am going to look at some of the measures on which the government was close to making some good decisions. I will not talk about the jets. I will not talk about the jails. I will not talk about the corporate tax cuts, though I know the member for Winnipeg Centre will be disappointed about the latter. However, anyone who pays any attention at all will know that these decisions will have a huge impact on this country and the citizens of this country for years to come. I want to talk about some of the things the government was close to getting right in the budget.

The first one was the government's rollover of two provisions of the employment insurance rules, those being the best 14 weeks and working while receiving benefits. The government extended them for one year, and that is a positive thing, because it will make a difference in the lives of those people who are working in seasonal industries but who are actually not seasonal workers. Many times they work in rural or remote communities.

When this pilot project was first announced in 2005, it focused on allowing these people to stay in those communities and support the business that needed access to a workforce. That is why these measures were implemented back then. They were put in place for a period of three years as a pilot project and have been renewed since then. They have been rolled over yet again in this budget.

• (1335)

When this budget was presented back in March, many interventions were made by people who live in rural communities, who said that these provisions should be made permanent. If there were ever two pilot projects that could be justified being made permanent, it would be these two particular measures.

I applaud the government for recognizing the pilot projects for a year. However, it would have been far more beneficial had the government made them a permanent provision of the EI system going forward. It would certainly have been more beneficial for the businesses, seasonal businesses, and workers in those rural communities that were most impacted. Therefore, this was just a half measure.

The other half measure I want to talk about and commend the government for is the firefighters tax deduction. Again, we made these comments when the budget was presented the last time, in particular, that the proposed budget did not include all of the people in the community. If we were serious about recognizing volunteer firefighters, then we would have a refundable tax credit. However, this sets up a two-tier volunteer fire department: those who qualify for the tax credit and those who do not. I have 50 volunteer fire departments in my riding. Many of the volunteers are older and many work in seasonal industries. Those who do not make \$22,000, and there are a fair number of them, receive no benefit from this at all. In volunteer fire departments that pay their volunteers an honorarium, we already have a provision where the first \$1,000 of that honorarium is tax exempt. However, under this provision the volunteers would have to pick one or the other, and so there is really no net benefit for those already accessing the \$1,000 tax exemption.

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We are asking all of the volunteer firefighters to do the same job. When the whistle blows or their pager goes off, they are all expected to have the same level of training and know exactly what to do. These are the guys rushing into the fire when everyone else is rushing out. They are all going into the same burning buildings and taking the same risks. When they show up at head-on collisions with the jaws of life, they all have to know how to extricate the victims, such as a young 18-year-old splattered on the dash of a car. However, what the government is saying with this tax credit is that one of the firefighters is worth more than the other who is not making \$22,000. That is not fair.

Again, I commend the government for this first half step. We made it aware of this in the last budget discussion, and I wish the government had taken it that one step further. We only have about 100,000 volunteer firefighters. This could have included everyone.

To summarize, there are some aspects of this budget that are like a bouquet, a bouquet of thorns with a couple of roses dropped in it. Once we get into the weeds, into the detail, we see that the government, with a little more effort, could have done better for all Canadians. It could have done better in levelling the field for all Canadians.

• (1340)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always listen with great interest when my friend starts criticizing us.

I want to make sure that I heard him correctly and would like to get his permission to quote him. He actually commended the government, this from the opposition. Can I quote him and say that the Liberals have actually commended the government for the firefighters tax credit? Recognizing the fact that more than half of his caucus voted against it in the last budget, it is important for me to get his permission so that we can quote a key Liberal member of Parliament commending this government for this tax credit.

Do I have his permission?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, does he need unanimous consent for that?

Just as a point of clarity, when those members of our caucus who are still with us voted against the last provision, it was specifically because the private members' measure did not include everyone. It was a non-refundable tax credit. Therefore, it was about this group of committed volunteers, this group of firefighters, who took the same risks and did the same job but were to be treated differently. That is why the opposition was there.

Some might argue that the provision was only for the honorariums received through firefighting. Whether it was for that or for general revenues, it does not matter. It did not level the field. It was not fair to all firefighters and that is where we had a problem.

• (1345)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think the Conservatives view Canadian taxpayers the way P.T. Barnum used to view circus-goers, because there has been a bait and switch in this budget. There has been a sleight of hand. It is like pulling a sedated bunny out of some tattered old top hat and

trying to convince Canadians there is something good and new and magic about this.

In fact, the bait and switch came with a series of little rinky-dink populist tax breaks that very few people will avail themselves of, certainly not those in need, and not the 52% of children in my riding who live below the poverty line. Not a single one of them will play hockey because of the rinky-dink, little tax credits.

The really big ticket items, the really expensive items, in this budget are the billions of dollars of jets and billions of dollars of prisons and billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts. All of their little accumulative, minor tax credits pale in comparison to the one big corporate tax cut, which, frankly, will do nothing to elevate the citizens of my riding out of poverty.

Would he not agree with me there is something P.T. Barnum-like about the Conservatives with their sedated bunnies and their tattered top hats?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, we will stay away from Hugh Hefner and sedated bunnies.

The member for Winnipeg Centre, I think, hits it right on. What we have seen is not a focus on changing behaviours; what we have seen is a contrived and very deliberate political approach to try to curry favour with various segments of the population.

The tax deduction for sports registration is an obvious one. If the Conservatives want to help those who are making a decision on a financial basis whether or not to get involved in amateur sport, would that money not be better invested into programs like KidSport Canada? It is an organization that helps young Canadians get involved in entry-level programs.

Is the tax deduction for the arts not trying to curry that same political favour with a particular portion of the population? I believe it is.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a more proper thank you to the people of Ottawa—Vanier for putting their faith in me for a seventh time during the last election. I can assure them that I remain committed to their well-being and to fighting for their interests here in this House.

That said, I would like to begin my critique of the budget by talking about the regional concerns surrounding the future of the public servants in our community.

[*English*]

The government is committed to balancing the budget. That is something the government should achieve and Liberals will certainly be supportive in that objective. The question is how it will attain it.

The Budget

The government has said that it will not cut certain areas, such as transfers to the provinces and individuals. Therefore, essentially it has limited the universe in which it can effect cuts to about an \$80 billion discretionary envelope. The cuts over the next four years will not be in the order of 5%, as some people have said. In terms of absolute numbers, it will be in the order of \$1 billion in 2012-13, \$2 billion the year after and \$4 billion in each of the two succeeding years, for a total of \$13 billion. Out of an \$80 billion envelope, that represents cuts of almost 14%. Therein lies the rub.

Conservatives said during the campaign, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs repeated it ad nauseam during the campaign, that there would be no cuts to the public service and it would only be done through attrition. The average number of public servants who leave the government through attrition every year is about 10,000 and that represents a saving of about \$1 billion on the basis that none of them would be replaced, which cannot be done.

The best guesstimates are that about a third need to be replaced, otherwise the delivery of programs would be crippled. The savings from attrition at most is \$750 million a year. That is a far cry from \$4 billion. Therefore, there will be cuts and the government has acknowledged that, after the election of course.

We are looking at serious numbers. Some have hinted at as many as 80,000 public servants, 40,000 by attrition if none are replaced, which cannot be done as I have mentioned, plus another 40,000. Depending on how and where it is done, it will have an incredible impact on certain local economies, this one in particular. The national capital region will probably be the worst affected. The individuals let go will have some serious fiscal problems of their own if they are not treated properly.

There has been nothing from the government in terms of how it will approach it, except that it put the President of the Treasury Board in charge, and I will say a bit more on that in a minute. We do not know the governing principles and we do not know what kinds of packages will be offered to public servants who will be let go, so on and so forth.

Right now in this area and other parts of the country where there is a higher concentration of public servants there are serious concerns. That is all I heard about over the weekend. People are wondering and are a little concerned about what is going to happen to their futures. The government has to be very transparent with its own employees, something it has not learned how to do in the last five years. Hopefully, now that it feels more comfortable with its majority, it will treat its employees a bit better than it has in the past. We will see.

Speaking of treatment, the basic fundamentals mean the government has to be transparent with its employees and has to treat them respectfully. We still have, despite the efforts of the government at times, one of the best public services in the world and employees deserve no less than professional treatment, transparency, honesty and forthrightness. I hope the President of the Treasury Board, as he embarks on this exercise, will be guided by such principles.

I go back to the President of the Treasury Board. It is rather ironic that he would be the one asked to do this after the Auditor General's

report that was tabled in the House last week. What we have found out is appalling. Parliament has been misled by the government in terms of its expenditures and there has been a misuse of funds. An approved envelope meant for one thing was used for something else entirely. There has been an abuse of ministerial authority in determining how money is spent, without any documentary evidence whatsoever.

• (1350)

Talk about padding one's own host. The \$50 million that were to be used to improve the flow of goods and people across the borders between Canada and the United States were used 300 kilometres away in the minister's riding, at his discretion. The Conservatives have the gall to put him in charge of cutting \$11 billion over the next four years. We will have to see how that goes.

There are a few other matters that should be noted.

[Translation]

One of those matters is political party funding. I do not want the hon. members to worry about me personally, so I will say that it does not matter to me if the subsidies are eliminated or not. I have never received the subsidy and have never wanted to. Things are taken care of in my riding and there are no issues. But the irony runs deeper. We are facing an intellectual challenge: individuals who wish to contribute to a political party are limited to contributing \$1,100 a year, while a third party can legally sneak in, get involved in campaigns in every riding and spend \$3,000. Why the double standard?

It has not been an issue until now because the per-vote subsidy levelled the playing field. When the subsidy is eliminated, it is crucial that Parliament review political party financing legislation to ensure that fairness is a governing principle. It is not right that one person can spend \$3,000 in a riding and that another is limited to \$1,100 in political contributions. Political parties are registered by law with Elections Canada to protect the interests of the various political groups represented here in the House. Since this subsidy is being eliminated, Parliament must address the issue.

• (1355)

[English]

We do need greater literacy in fiscal matters in our country. On that front, the government had created a body that looked at that and made some serious recommendations. One would hope the government would follow up on those recommendations. It is important that it does.

Statements by Members

The level of individual indebtedness in our country is way too high. It brings about a risk factor that we could attenuate. Currently in some cities the housing prices are untenable and if for whatever reason, oil prices, worsening international climates or investments were to dry up, we would see a dramatic drop of up to 10%, 20% in some cases, of the value of real estate and the concomitant disaster in some personal finances because of the high level of indebtedness. We need to address that as a country and I do not see the efforts to do just that in the budget.

Those are two things to which I would hope the government would pay attention and that we would see better efforts to ensure that the financial situations of individual Canadians would be looked after.

[Translation]

We will be coming back to the whole issue of crime. The government's approach to this issue is completely backwards. The exact opposite is what is needed. We need to reduce crime, rather than throw people in prison for even longer periods and at increasingly exorbitant costs. We will come back to this, since an omnibus bill on crime is coming down the pipe. We will definitely be talking about this issue again.

Lastly, I would like to talk about post-budget questions. What worries me about the government's attitude is that it has said nothing about any investment in education, health care or the needs of Canadians once the budget is balanced. Instead, it talks about increasing the number of tax havens for the wealthy, when it should be doing the opposite. Therein lies the main difference between the Conservative philosophy and the Liberal philosophy. We Liberals try to strike a balance between the needs of Canadians and the need to create enough wealth to support one another.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments.

It strikes me as a bit odd that the member would talk about not being open with Canadians about the tough decisions that need to be made when a government is running a deficit. I remember when the member's party was in government. I do not remember members of that party going before Canadians in that election and telling them that they would have to make the very difficult decision of cutting provincial transfers for things like health care, or when they made the difficult decision to cut education transfers, driving up the cost of education for every Canadian student. They cut science and technology. I do not remember them saying that they would cut a great many things that really were not in their jurisdiction. They were responsibilities to be transferred to the provinces.

Maybe the member would like to talk about the lack of transparency of that Liberal government and why he now believes he is seated where he is.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I will let the last comment slip by. If I have learned one thing from the Conservatives, it is that defeats are not permanent.

The member should do his homework. I ran for the House for this first time in 1995 in a byelection. That was at the time of the budget. The budget, the toughest budget, that the Liberals presented at the time gave a recipe for what would come in terms of transfer cuts and in terms of our own government cuts. That is what I ran on in this city.

The member should go back and do his homework because I have been through that. It is only because we were transparent, put facts on the table and said exactly what we would do that people felt they could trust us. We did exactly what we said we would do. We cleaned up the mess—

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. When the House returns to this matter, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier will have three minutes remaining in questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NIPISSING—TIMISKAMING

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and distinct privilege for me to rise in this House for the first time. I wish to congratulate you in your new role as well as the members of the House for their election successes.

I would like to express my profound appreciation to my constituents in the great riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming for the trust they have bestowed upon me. I would also like to express a heartfelt thanks to my wife Joanne, my son David and my daughter Katie for their strength and support, and to all the members of my campaign team, my sincere gratitude.

I represent a beautiful region which is truly a microcosm of Canada. It is blessed with breathtaking lakes, two of which are namesakes for the riding, Nipissing and Timiskaming. It is also known for its mighty rivers and beautiful forests. It is truly a land of productive, innovative and creative people, and I am humbled to serve them.

* * *

[Translation]

TERREBONNE—BLAINVILLE

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House for the first time on behalf of the people of Terrebonne—Blainville. As a new member of Parliament, I would first like to thank them for having confidence in me. I am very much looking forward to representing them here in Ottawa.

It is time to get to work to advance the priorities of the people of Terrebonne—Blainville: helping small and medium-sized businesses, helping families make ends meet and getting serious about our environment.

The people of Terrebonne—Blainville have still not recovered from the 2002 closure of GM, which cost many jobs in my riding, and there are concerns about the closure of Electrolux, which will affect 1,300 people in the Lanaudière region.

I will do everything I can to ensure that the people of Terrebonne—Blainville are heard in Parliament.

* * *

[English]

GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the people of Kitchener—Waterloo for re-electing me as their member of Parliament.

I am truly honoured to continue to serve and represent this dynamic community. My riding is well-known for its innovative and entrepreneurial culture, and one of the key drivers of our success is the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber has played an important role in the development of our region, providing support for local enterprises, and fostering collaborative relationships between business owners and the wider community.

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce. I congratulate its members on this significant milestone, thank them for their service to our community, and wish them continued success in the years to come.

* * *

CULTURAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young man from the first nations Mi'kmaq community of Conne River in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

Mise'l Jeddore was awarded the 2011 cultural scholarship for St. Anne's School in Conne River. Despite his young age, Mise'l is proving to be an outstanding ambassador for the aboriginal culture. As part of the drumming group for his school, Mise'l has represented the school at events as far away as Japan.

Currently, Mise'l is attending Memorial University in St. John's Newfoundland, where he continues to actively promote the Mi'kmaq culture.

I ask all members to join me in saluting this exceptional young man.

* * *

SPORTS

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize some great achievements by young Barrie athletes in the past few weeks.

The Barrie Spirit under-13 girls soccer team was in our nation's capital to compete in the Ottawa IceBreaker Soccer Tournament against a strong field of 24 teams. The girls won their first five games, outscoring the opposition 14 to 2, and faced the Ottawa Puri

in the final with a winning goal after two sudden-death penalty kicks.

The Barrie Kempettes Gymnastics Club travelled to Newmarket to compete in the Shenderey Gymnastics Club's invitational meet. Our local athletes had an amazing competition, bringing home 28 medals. All Barrie gymnasts finished in the top 10 in their respective categories.

Our high school athletes competed in the OFSAA championships in Sudbury. Barrie again had an incredible showing, taking gold in many disciplines. Innisdale's senior girls' team won the school's first OFSAA banner in track and field in over 20 years.

Barrie's athletes and coaches are doing our community proud. I applaud their hard work and dedication, and congratulate them on such a strong showing.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my supporters, the people of Verchères—Les Patriotes who, on May 2, expressed their will to have me represent them in the House.

I humbly accept this mandate and commit to serving them and to protecting their interests throughout my time here.

I would also like to thank my family, my friends and my husband for their daily support.

I also want to say that I am proud to be the first Tunisian woman to sit as a member of the Canadian Parliament.

On Monday the government presented its budget and there were certain positive aspects to it.

However, what is the government doing to help young graduates who are starting their professional lives with an average student debt of \$25,000? Or to help families that have a huge debt load and are being crushed by astronomical credit card interest rates? Or to help the 5 million Canadians who still do not have a family doctor and have to go to emergency? What is the government doing to meet the real needs of Canadians?

By granting subsidies to the country's privileged, the government has made its priorities clear. And those priorities are unacceptable.

* * *

[English]

SASKATOON—ROSETOWN—BIGGAR

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I join my colleagues in the 41st Parliament. We are here with a clear mandate, after a historic election, a humbling and gratifying prospect.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank the residents of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar for providing me with this great honour once again. Saskatchewan, the land of living skies, is a wonderful place to live, to work, and to raise a family, largely because of the very friendly and supportive communities found there.

I recognize that it is through their faith and the hard work of many volunteers that I have the opportunity to serve my wonderful constituency and this great country over the next four years. For this I am profoundly grateful and eager to work on their behalf.

* * *

KOREAN WAR

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the war in Korea, the forgotten war, a war still on hold, still not resolved, the war that was never declared, but make no mistake, it was a war. Some 30,000 Canadians served under severe conditions. They gave a small, beleaguered nation the opportunity to be free. The price of this freedom was 516 who never came home, who never grew old.

The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry received an American presidential citation for its heroic accomplishments, against unbelievable odds, protecting the capital city of Seoul against possible capture in the battle of Kapyong.

Patrick O'Connor of the Royal Canadian Regiment was killed one day after penning these poignant words:

There is blood on the hills of Korea
It's the gift of freedom they love
May their names live in glory forever
And their souls in Heaven above

We must not forget.

* * *

[Translation]

MANICOUAGAN

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity during my first speech in the House to acknowledge the several thousand members of the Innu and Naskapi nations who mobilized and placed their confidence in me on May 2.

Such aboriginal participation in federal politics, and Canadian politics in general, had never been seen in 500 years of shared history. The fact that my non-native constituents also opted for a culturally integrated vision of regional development and social relations lays the foundation for a new alliance between the Quebec, Coaster, Innu and Naskapi communities in the riding of Manicouagan.

Given the reality of northern development, this solidarity will be essential for giving precedence to citizens' interests, social imperatives and environmental ideals over purely commercial considerations.

Accordingly, my interventions during this Parliament will focus on preserving and enhancing the unique dynamic of my riding.

● (1410)

[English]

SYRIA

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has taken a clear and principled stand in opposition to the current Syrian regime. We have implemented sanctions designed to punish those currently in power for the violence and atrocities they have perpetrated against their own citizens.

Sadly, the regime has continued its abhorrent ways this weekend, sending military forces into the town of Jisr al-Shugur, to suppress anyone who might oppose it, even peacefully. Thousands of people have fled to other parts of Syria and to neighbouring Turkey.

I would like to commend Turkey for its openness and organization in welcoming these refugees and attending to them in an orderly way. Turkey is a friend of these new refugees and a long-time ally of Canada. Syrian officials are to be soundly condemned for their actions.

Our government will continue to monitor the situation in Syria. Working with our allies, we will continue to act decisively in support of the Syrian people who are seeking greater freedoms and the most basic of human rights through peaceful means.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR WEEK

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating National Blood Donor Week from June 13 to 19.

Recognized by a bill in 2008, National Blood Donor Week is an opportunity to thank the donors and volunteers that help to ensure the health of all their fellow citizens.

It is also an opportunity to make people aware of the importance of donating blood and encourage them to do so, particularly during the summer months when donation levels are usually down.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party and the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry, I would like to thank Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec for their commitment. I encourage everyone to give blood. Let us work together to save lives because giving blood is giving of ourselves.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March we presented the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a positive plan to keep taxes low, and support jobs and growth.

Canadians want the budget and its important economic measures passed without delay.

Later today, Parliament will vote to approve the budget in principle. We will vote on a budget that will support Canada's forestry, mining, manufacturing, agricultural and aerospace sectors; increase income support for Canada's most in need seniors; bring health care and social transfers to record highs; help attract doctors and nurses to rural areas; provide tax relief for family caregivers, volunteer firefighters; and more.

Today we will vote on a budget that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said, "will continue to support the economic recovery and help Canadian businesses prosper".

I ask the opposition, why would it vote against this budget and its positive initiatives?

Let us work together and move forward with our low tax plan and Canada's economic recovery.

* * *

[Translation]

FLOODING IN MONTRÉGIE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity here today to commend the extraordinary generosity shown by Quebecers this weekend during the cleanup, dubbed "La Grande Corvée", of the flood zone in Montérégie.

Over 3,000 volunteers worked together to ease the suffering of the men, women and children who have been enduring the wrath of nature for over 50 days now.

I would also like to congratulate the event's organizers, led by my good friend Michel Fecteau, the man behind SOS Richelieu, and his team. They did an excellent job. Bravo to you, Michel, and to your entire team.

I would remind everyone that another big cleanup is planned for June 18 and 19. For more information, please visit www.sosrichelieu.com.

Albert Jacquard once said "From now on, the solidarity needed most of all is that of everyone on earth".

The magnificent solidarity shown by the people of Quebec deserves to be applauded by all members of Parliament.

* * *

[English]

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon is a vast riding that encompasses a number of small communities, including the Fraser Canyon community of Boston Bar. Boston Bar is home to about 800 people and has its history rooted in the gold rush.

The people of Boston Bar are now enthusiastically behind the Vancouver Canucks' rush for silver in the form of the Stanley Cup. Just to ensure that the good people of Boston Bar would not be

Statements by Members

accused of favouring the rival Boston Bruins, they have decided to temporarily change its name to Vancouver Bar for the month of June.

With game six of the Stanley Cup finals taking place tonight, I would invite all members of the House to join with me and with all Canadians to salute the community of Vancouver Bar for taking this symbolic step to cheer on Canada's team. Go Canucks go.

* * *

•(1415)

[Translation]

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the big night, the sixth game in Boston. This evening, after 18 years, the cup will be coming home to Canada.

On this side of the House, even Montreal Canadiens fans are behind the Canucks. This is their 40th anniversary and the NDP will be there to celebrate their 50th.

[English]

Like the Canucks, we know something about perseverance and breakthroughs.

I think of all those young boys and girls who play Canada's game for the love of it. All those early mornings and the life lessons learned. None of those kids have ever seen a Canadian team win the Stanley Cup.

That is going to change tonight. It is time for them to feel that rush of Canadian pride, like we did with the 1993 Habs or throughout the eighties with the Oilers.

So, for the kids, let us say it loud and clear. Go Canucks go.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March, we presented the next phase of the economic action plan, a plan to keep taxes low, create jobs and ensure economic growth. Rather than focusing on the economy, the opposition triggered an election, but Canadians voted for our plan to support job creation and economic growth. Canadians want this budget and these measures to be adopted without any further delay. Later today, Parliament will vote to approve the budget based on these principles.

This budget will support forestry, mining, manufacturing and agriculture, as well as the aerospace sector. It will increase support for the neediest seniors and funding for the health system. It will lower taxes for families. In short, this budget will ensure our economic stability. Let us work together and move forward with our plan for low taxes and continued economic recovery.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***LIBYA**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is involved in the conflict in Libya, and the government will ask Parliament to extend the commitment of our armed forces. As we prepare to debate and vote, the Prime Minister should answer some questions.

First, is the objective of the mission in Libya still to protect civilians, as requested by the UN resolution?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, absolutely. Our work in Libya is in accordance with the UN resolution. Our military mission has not changed. The resolution on this policy, which we will debate tomorrow, will aim to extend the mission by three and a half months.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the suffering of the Libyan people has gone on for far too long. What is needed now is a Libyan-led political transition. The international community must work to negotiate a ceasefire and to ensure the continued protection of civilians.

Considering that, can the Prime Minister tell us, will the government commit to remaining strictly within the bounds of the UN resolution and the UN mandate? Will the government commit to increasing Canada's contribution to the UN humanitarian appeal?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the UN sanctioned mission in Libya to protect the vulnerable civilians is not a partisan one.

I want to say I greatly appreciate the engagement of both the New Democrats and the Liberals on this very important issue. The leader of the NDP, the NDP foreign affairs critic and others have called for greater humanitarian support to support the vulnerable people of Libya.

I want to say to them very directly that we appreciate that advice and agree with the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people would think that no one would be a fan of Gadhafi, but he has been pretty good for business.

Under the government, Canada's exports to Libya have skyrocketed and that included the sale of arms to the Gadhafi regime. Canadian owned SNC-Lavalin received a \$275 million contract to build a prison for Gadhafi.

Will the government finally take steps to ensure that Canadian investment never contributes to human rights violations abroad?

● (1420)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously this government and this House have authorized sanctions be made against the Libyan regime, a specified group of people.

I am certainly very happy to entertain any ideas or suggestions that the Leader of the Opposition has in this regard.

Obviously one of the key elements of Canada's foreign policy is to promote Canadian values, the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law abroad. We are certainly prepared to work with the Leader of the Opposition on this issue.

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*[Translation]***AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on another topic, the Auditor General has issued a damning report on the questionable use of the border infrastructure fund. The Prime Minister's defence does not hold up.

The Prime Minister is suggesting to Canadians that it is normal for a border improvement fund to be used for everything except improving borders. What planet is he living on?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we had to move expeditiously, as we did at the height of the economic downturn, to get infrastructure projects moving. These infrastructure projects had to move especially quickly.

At the end of the day, as Minister of Infrastructure, I signed off on the estimates. One of the things contained in there was a proposal recommended to me by the public service, a proposal that I accepted, to use that gateway fund to get the projects moving especially quickly to meet the tight timeframes.

The Auditor General has made some important recommendations on transparency and accountability to Parliament and this government completely agrees.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe the government is not precisely sure what the money was spent on, but let us just remind folks here in the House that even under the disguise of the G8 legacy fund some of this just does not cut it.

There is \$1.2 million for benches, bike racks and flagpoles 62 kilometres from the summit; \$1.3 million on sidewalks 85 kilometres from the summit; and \$2 million on a walkway, docking facilities, landscaping and lighting 131 kilometres away from the summit, nowhere near the border. How can the government justify these kinds of expenditures?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were three objectives of the legacy fund. The second was to spruce up an already beautiful part of our country. There were literally 2,000 journalists from around the world in addition to thousands and thousands of delegates, some staying well in excess of 100 kilometres away from the summit site itself. These were all public infrastructure projects that came in on budget. Every single dollar was accounted for on these municipal public infrastructure projects.

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AIR INDIA

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is forgetting the fourth one: to re-elect the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Oral Questions

My question is for the Minister of Public Safety.

It has now been a year since the report of Judge Major on Air India. We are now coming up to June 23, which is always a moment of enormous sadness and memory for the families of the Air India bombing.

Why is it that the Government of Canada has made no decision yet with respect to *ex gratia* payments to these families who have been waiting for so long for justice, consideration and reconciliation?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bombing of Air India Flight 182 is a stark reminder that Canada is not immune from the threat of terrorism.

One of the first acts of our government was to commission an inquiry into the Air India bombing, something that had been left long neglected by the prior Liberal government. By commissioning the Major report to investigate the failings that led to the attack in 1985, our government listened to the families of victims when no other government would.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if one listens to what Judge Major has said recently about the conduct of the government since his report was published, it is very clear that the kind of pious sanctimony coming out of the mouth of the minister just does not match the situation we are facing.

I ask the minister, why no *ex gratia* payments and why no movement on the key recommendations of Judge Major with respect to the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service? Why have you not moved on these questions?

• (1425)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why you have not moved on it, but what I can say is that we have delivered our response to that report with the Air India inquiry action plan. This action plan is a road map, a document that looks at where we were, where we are and where we need to go to help ensure that such a horrific attack does not occur again.

We thank the families of the victims who have worked and consulted on this action plan and we commit to their continued involvement and consultation through this ongoing process.

[Translation]

RESCUE CENTRES

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans now knows that what he wants to close in St. John's and Quebec City are rescue centres for people in marine distress, and not simply call centres. In Quebec City, the French language issue is also involved. Navigation in the St. Lawrence is very difficult. If a problem arises, precise, fast and efficient answers are needed in the appropriate language. There is no room for any misunderstanding.

Will the minister leave the rescue centres where they should be in order to save lives?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consolidation of the search and rescue dispatch centres into the joint rescue coordination centres will have no negative impact on the current levels of service provided by the Coast Guard. The maritime community across Canada will still receive services in both official languages by both the Coast Guard, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and Canadian Forces aircraft from their existing locations. Mariners in distress will continue to communicate with the Maritime and traffic communication centres and the same ships and aircraft will respond as they have always done.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a legacy of deceit, pork and cynicism. It sounds like the old Liberal sponsorship scandal, but it is the editorial pages commenting on the behaviour of the new Treasury Board President.

The member has abused the public trust and he must come clean. Will he explain to the House how he managed to divert \$50 million from border infrastructure payments and put it into a private slush fund? Can he explain why the Auditor General was unable to find any evidence of oversight or documentation to explain this outrageous spending spree?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to begin with that question. Just about everything the member opposite said is not the case.

With respect to the G8 legacy fund, we supported 32 public infrastructure projects. Every single dollar is accounted for. To move expeditiously, the public service recommended using this fund so that we could use existing authorities to move quickly. I accepted that recommendation.

The Auditor General has suggested that we need greater transparency and greater accountability. There is no argument from me or from this government. We fully accept the great work that the Auditor General has done on this issue.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough that the member is hiding behind the verbosity as a member for Ottawa West—Nepean. If he cannot stand and explain this \$50 million spending spree, then he has no business being at Treasury Board.

The government promised to do politics differently. Instead, we have the spectacle of three amigos divvying up pork barrel slush funds and he cannot stand in the House and produce any evidence or documentation that could have stopped this outrageous Muskoka gravy train.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I encourage the member opposite to read the report of the Auditor General. He speaks about a committee of three people making decisions with respect to public infrastructure. In fact, that is not the case. None of the decisions with respect to the 32 projects was approved by that committee or any of the three individuals who served on it.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, when the Conservatives promised to do things differently from the Liberals, the Conservative platform said that they would “oblige public officials to create the records necessary to document their actions and decisions”. That is precisely what the former industry minister seemed to be desperately lacking with regard to the G8 spending scandal.

What changed between the time when he called for sound management of public money and 2010, when a slush fund was created to please the minister's friends in his riding?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the member opposite that in fact is not the case. There was a full and complete contribution agreement for each of the 32 public infrastructure projects that were accounted for. Each of the projects came in on budget and in each of the projects every dollar was accounted for.

The Auditor General has raised some concerns about the process in terms of the selection of public infrastructure projects. We certainly agree with her recommendations and will work to implement them in very short order.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like magic, the concept of ministerial responsibility seems to have completely disappeared from the vocabulary of all Conservative ministers, especially when the time comes to explain misspending and poor management in a given department. On the other hand, they do not hesitate to take credit for the economic recovery, even though this government shamefully dragged its feet until it risked losing power.

Canadians want to know why they should have to pay the price of cuts to services when the government cannot seem to explain its wasteful G8 spending.

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government supported more than 28,000 public infrastructure projects in every part of the country. The Auditor General, in her last report in 2010, looked at that and gave the government an A.

With respect to the 32 projects in this one fund, she has recommended two areas where she thinks it could have been done better and the government has fully accepted that advice.

All of these infrastructure projects, like resurfacing the runway of an airport, building a community centre, resurfacing a provincial highway, are all good public infrastructure projects that will benefit the people of Canada for many years to come.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest employment numbers show that, despite what the government is saying, the employment crisis is not over. There are still 1.4 million Canadians without work, plus hundreds of thousands working part-time because they cannot find anything better. Three out of five unemployed people will not receive any help.

Why is the minister refusing to support Canadian families that need help returning to the workforce?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we tried to do with our economic action plan. We believe that the best way to improve things for these people is to help them find work. To do that, they need to develop skills. That is why we have invested in training for 1,200 people through the economic action plan—to help them find work today and in the future. We have been successful and Friday's numbers prove that.

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not good enough.

Last week the minister joked about the *Wizard of Oz*, but what is no joke is his failure to create jobs. Millions of Canadians are struggling. Hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts to profitable banks and big oil make no economic sense and create no jobs.

Instead of just leading Canadians down a yellow brick road, will the government step out from behind the curtain and tie corporate tax incentives to real job creation?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when talking about real job creation, May saw 22,000 more Canadians working. I am not too sure why the opposition thinks that may be a negative. We have 560,000 more Canadians working today than we did in July of 2009.

However, that is no reason to stop. That is no reason to hold back this budget. We need to pass the budget quickly so we can continue to create jobs for Canadians.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder our manufacturing sector has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. The government just does not get it.

Last week we saw more dismal trade numbers. In six years the government has managed to turn a \$62 billion trade surplus into a \$9 billion deficit. Every serious Canadian observer can see that this country has a trade crisis.

Oral Questions

My question for the minister is this. What is his plan for addressing Canada's serious trade imbalance?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I congratulate the member on his election and welcome him to the House.

Also, I am pleased to see that he is engaging on the trade file. As he knows, trade is absolutely critical to building our economy. It is critical to creating jobs. It is critical to our long-term prosperity as a country. I would encourage him to get on side with this government as we seek to build that long-term security for our country.

• (1435)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a return to the days when Canada was a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water, reliant on exports of raw resources for growth. Subsidies to big oil and tax cuts for the most profitable corporations have only helped drive up our dollar far beyond its real value. No wonder our exports are in real trouble.

When will the government replace its failed trade policies with targeted measures to boost exports and fix Canada's trade deficit?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to boost exports is to expand our trading relationships around the world.

Trade accounts for some 60% of our GDP. I am surprised the member does not know that. He should get onside with our government's plan to expand trading relationships, build our prosperity, create jobs and ensure that economic growth continues.

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the forestry industry is the cornerstone of over 300 Canadian communities, a number of which are found in my riding of Pontiac. This industry is in crisis and, since 2005, close to 90,000 jobs have been lost in this industry across Canada. The government claims to be helping this industry, but it is not doing enough.

Why does this government insist on giving everything to the oil industry when our country's forestry industry is dying?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the preceding questions, it was interesting to hear about international trade and open markets since the forestry industry's problem is clearly a matter of markets. Unfortunately, the United States construction industry has encountered major problems, which means that our Quebec and Canadian companies are not able to export as much lumber to the United States. As long as this market is not replaced by new markets, something we have been working on, it will be difficult for our companies to prosper.

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year when the then minister of industry blocked the sale of a potash corporation to BHP Billiton, he said that there was clearly a need to upgrade to update the Investment Canada Act, particularly with respect to an extremely important evaluation criteria called net benefit.

We have not heard a word for the past eight months. Foreign investors, Canadians, and I would dare say Parliament, would like to know where that clarity lies.

Will the government give us that clarity for which we have been waiting for eight months?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is key to the growth of the Canadian economy and our government will continue to encourage it. That being said, significant investments will continue to be reviewable under the Investment Canada Act.

I know the House committee was studying the Investment Canada Act before the opposition called an unnecessary election. I hope that study will continue so we can look at ways to improve the act so it works in the best interests of Canadians and our economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is some urgency. We know that TMX, which includes the Toronto stock exchange and other Canadian stock exchanges, could be sold this year, either to a foreign company, the London stock exchange, or to a Canadian company, the Maple Group.

There is an urgent need for clarity in this extremely important matter. We have been waiting for eight months. We do not have time to wait for another committee to meet this fall.

We need to know what the new net benefit rules are right now.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is key to the growth of the Canadian economy, and our government will continue to promote it.

That being said, significant investments will continue to be reviewable under the Investment Canada Act.

I know that the House committee was studying the Investment Canada Act before the opposition provoked an unnecessary election. I hope that this study will continue in committee so that we can look at ways to improve the act so that it continues to work in the best interests of Canada and our economy.

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the Canada Revenue Agency giving itself top grades on service to taxpayers, an internal audit found that these grades were in fact inflated by almost 20% and fell well below acceptable standards.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives continue to pat themselves on the back, to mislead the public and hide their own incompetence. Could the minister please explain this lack of accountability to Canadian taxpayers who have the right to expect timely, respectful service?

• (1440)

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the fair and equitable tax treatment of all Canadians. An important example of this is our government's creation of the taxpayers bill of rights, along with the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman.

Internal auditing does take place in order to keep the agency accountable and to ensure that services to Canadians continue to improve.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Union of Postal Employees has offered to accept the minister's request to suspend the strike as long as its contract is reinstated. Canada Post is refusing.

The strike drags on and mail delivery is reduced to three days a week. Will the minister push Canada Post to agree to reinstate the contract so we can end this strike and get everyone back to the bargaining table?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Labour, I would like to express my disappointment that the parties have so far been unable to reach an agreement and that the union has felt it necessary to continue the strikes.

Our government has been given a strong mandate on the economy. I am concerned about the effects this will have on Canadians and Canadian businesses across the country.

I urge both parties to reach a negotiated agreement as soon as possible.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we start by accepting the contract, there will be no strike.

[Translation]

While Canada Post management wants to save on operating costs on the backs of the workers, we find that the cuts to service to Canadians are unacceptable.

As a result of this strategy, Canadians across the country will get only three days of service a week.

Will the Minister of Labour take the necessary measures to ensure that both parties negotiate in good faith and that service will be maintained with due regard for labour rights?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I urge both parties, as I mentioned before, to reach a negotiated agreement as soon as possible. The best solution is one that the parties come up with together, by themselves.

The minister is monitoring the situation closely and will continue to provide the parties with the support and assistance required through the mediator from Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two years after the government passed an attack on pay equity for women in the public service, with the help of the Liberals, it has emerged that the law is too complicated and the rules too severe to be implemented.

When will the government stop playing games with women's income and commit to treating pay equity as a right, not as a bargaining chip?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Tony Clement: It is always nice to have friends on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

In all seriousness, the hon. member should understand that in order to pass these kinds of regulations, we wish to have discussions. We want to ensure that it is a fair and objective situation, particularly with respect to recourse in terms of the system we are replacing from the original one. That means ensuring we have regulations that make sense for all the parties involved. We anticipate that we will be able to put forward those regulations by the end of this year.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on his first speech in the House.

That being said, this government's position on the issue of pay equity completely abandons women in our country.

In 2011, Canadian women are still earning 71¢ for every dollar earned by a man. Even worse is that we know what to do to remedy the situation.

When will this government implement the recommendations of the 2004 pay equity task force?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, there needs to be co-operation in order to pass these kinds of regulations. I can say that by the end of 2011, it will be possible to have regulations. Under this new legislation, the employer and the bargaining agent are jointly responsible for ensuring equitable compensation when they are setting wages and not through a separate pay equity process or judicial enforcement.

• (1445)

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later today, Parliament will vote on approving budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a positive, forward-looking plan to keep Canada's economy growing while helping Canadian families, seniors and communities.

Indeed, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said that the plan would support the economic recovery by helping Canadian businesses prosper, compete and create jobs.

Could the Minister of State please inform the House of the latest news on Canada's job marketing?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we heard good numbers from Stats Canada: 22,000 more jobs in May. That brings us to a total of 560,000 jobs, as I have said, since July 2009.

However, if there is one Canadian still looking for a job, that is too many. We need to move forward with this budget because there are provisions in it that will help Canadians get back to work. It is important. It is urgent.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last fall, the Canada Revenue Agency gave itself top marks for its handling of requests for tax rulings. However, an audit revealed that CRA had cooked the books, left out some requests and did not start the clock when it got the others. It is easy to score top marks when an agency makes up the rules as it goes along.

What is the minister doing to clean up and bring more transparency to her department?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, internal auditing is in place in order to keep the agency accountable and to ensure service to Canadians is constantly improving.

As a result of this internal audit, CRA has in place an action plan designed to continue to improve the ways Canadians can interact with CRA regarding their taxes and their benefits. Our government is committed to the fair and equitable tax treatment of all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government in fact gets an "F" for failure.

Look at the issue of tax evasion. Business people allegedly even bribed employees of the Canada Revenue Agency in order to better defraud the tax system. What action was taken? Nine employees were dismissed, but still no action has been taken against the fraudsters. When will the public finally see action taken on the cases of tax fraud?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government appreciates that this is a very serious issue

Oral Questions

and we will not tolerate the types of alleged activities that are being reported. The RCMP, of course, is investigating this case and our officials are working with the RCMP. To be clear, many of these allegations date back more than a decade.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the E. coli outbreak in Germany gives Canadians even more reasons to worry about the safety of Canada's food. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food patted himself on the back for the hiring of 170 people by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, but refused to say how many were hired as inspectors.

How many of these new employees will act as inspectors and protect Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member has been paying close attention to the debate in the House on our budget. A colleague of mine mentioned that we will be voting on the budget this afternoon.

I would remind the member that in the budget there is an extra \$100 million over five years to enhance food safety. In addition, we are providing CFIA with a net increase of 733 inspection staff.

I would ask that member to stand in his place this afternoon and vote in favour of our government's budget.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually, on page 110 we see \$9 million and \$8 million, which do not quite add up to \$100 million.

The government does not get it. This is about the safety of the food that Canadians put on their families plates.

The results are in: CFIA is underfunded and we need more inspectors.

The Conservatives are failing. They brag about putting new money in the budget but they are actually taking it out.

When will the government stop playing shell games and making semantic arguments and get to the truly important work of ensuring food is safe for all Canadians?

• (1450)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I mentioned to that member last week that CFIA's first priority is the safety of Canadians. We are strengthening Canada's food safety system by ensuring the largest ever budgets for CFIA, which that member and his party consistently vote against.

We are continually reviewing costs to ensure efficiency.

I will finish up with a quote from a report on OECD countries that states:

Oral Questions

Canada is one of the best-performing countries in the 2010 Food Safety Performance World Ranking study. Its overall grade was superior, earning it a place among the top-tier countries.

That is our track record.

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's G8 report shows that \$50 million was quietly scooped from the border infrastructure fund to pay for gazebos hundreds of kilometres from the border.

Border infrastructure funds must reduce congestion and enhance security to qualify. In 2003, the fund upgraded Knight Street in Vancouver, though it is not close to the border, because it reduced congestion on a major border route.

Could the government explain how a gazebo reduces border congestion or enhances security?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken of this before but I will reiterate.

I signed off on the estimates of the department and ultimately I am accountable. I am right here in Parliament being held accountable for them.

The professional public service recommended that this fund be used as a vehicle to get quick action with respect to projects that were important as Canada was hosting the G8, and that is exactly what we did.

The Auditor General has come forward and said that she would like greater transparency and greater accountability. We completely agree and have accepted all of her recommendations.

[Translation]

TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot say that the government leads by example. The President of the Treasury Board is demanding cuts, but cabinet offices have been going in the other direction. Since 2008, there has been a 14% increase in the budgets of ministers' offices.

What does one say to aboriginal chiefs who come to Ottawa to report that there are still houses that are not hooked up to water systems on their reserves? What does one say to low-income seniors who must settle for a \$1.60 a day increase in the guaranteed income supplement?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we ran on the principle that it is time to balance the budget. We put forward a clear plan to the people of Canada to balance the budget one year earlier than in our previous budgetary plan in 2014-15. We have a clear goal and we have a clear means to get there.

That is what the people of Canada have spoken to, that is why they elected this government and that is why we are moving with those plans.

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to doling out cash or smearing its opponents, the government does it better than anyone else. However, when it comes to consultations on important issues, it mysteriously loses its marketing edge.

For the government's secretive border deal with the U.S., a so-called publication process is a four point questionnaire put on a government website.

Why is the government hiding the process and not ensuring that Canadians are consulted on one of the most important issues for our country?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to that question, the member opposite talked about spending taxpayer dollars on infrastructure projects. In fact, his riding is receiving some of the highest amounts for public infrastructure in all of Canada. That is because it deals with the perimeter and trade.

We want to ensure that we have an appropriate arrangement with the United States that will allow the auto worker in southwestern Ontario to continue to have employment so that more jobs and more opportunities are obtained through working constructively with President Obama's administration.

I would think that member would want to join us and support such an important initiative.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reason my border community is finally getting the justice it deserves is because New Democrats understand the border issue. The government does not understand the border issue. Every time it has been involved in border issues, it ends up thickening the border, costing jobs and putting us in a trade deficit. That is the reality of the government's record.

Why is the government afraid to consult Canadians with regard to how we will change our border practices? Why will it not actually listen to them? Why will we not have a proper dialogue. What is the government afraid of? It does not want to hear the truth from Canadians. They are concerned.

• (1455)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome the input of members opposite. If the member opposite or his constituents have any ideas on how we can de-thicken the border, we are certainly prepared to do that.

Oral Questions

I think there is no other government in Canadian history that has paid more attention and given greater focus to the Windsor-Detroit crossing than this government. We have come forward with a substantial plan. We are waiting for news from the people in Lansing, Michigan and the state capital as to whether they will endorse that vision and get on board with the federal government to ensure that jobs can be created on both sides of the border.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the leader of the official opposition will be travelling to Vancouver for his party's convention where the NDP will be debating a proposal, the NDP policy resolution to nationalize the auto industry, that calls upon the party to effectively campaign for the naturalization of the big three auto companies.

Would the Minister of Industry please inform this House what the Government of Canada's position is on the nationalization of the automotive industry.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on passing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We believe that calling on the government to nationalize an industry, especially one that is critical to our nation's economy, is reckless and irresponsible.

I would call upon my hon. colleagues to stand today and denounce such a position.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs a week ago about the situation of a dedicated veteran, Fabien Melanson, who is on a hunger strike in my riding of Charlottetown.

The minister said, "I have instructed my officials to follow up on this veteran's case".

Mr. Melanson has not heard from any officials at Veterans Affairs with regard to the specifics of his case and he has now gone 10 days without food.

Did the minister keep his word and instruct his officials to follow up with Mr. Melanson, yes or no?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our government has apologized for what happened years ago. My two predecessors have presented apologies and I also feel sorry for what happened under the previous government.

However, corrective measures were taken. I have instructed my officials and they are closely monitoring the situation so we take care of the health of this veteran and of all veterans.

*[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for six years, Nathalie Morin, a 27-year-old Canadian, has been held against her will by her husband in Saudi Arabia. She and her three children are prisoners in their own home, and according to Ms. Morin's mother, their rights and freedoms are violated every day.

In accordance with the motion unanimously adopted by the Quebec National Assembly on Friday, does the federal government commit to taking the measures required to repatriate Ms. Morin and her children?

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of this case and have been in close touch with Ms. Morin on this issue. This is a complex family matter and there is no easy solution. Consular officials will continue to work with Ms. Morin and Saudi officials toward a positive resolution to the matter.

I can also advise the House that this case has been raised by ministers in their meetings with Saudi officials.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the servant of Ottawa—Orléans in this House, it is a great honour to rise today on the first day of the National Public Service Week.

[Translation]

National Public Service Week is a perfect opportunity to reflect upon the many contributions that public servants make to our society every day.

[English]

With that in mind, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board to update the House on our government's appreciation of the hard work and professionalism of our public service.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans for his timely question and dedication to his constituents.

Indeed, National Public Service Week is an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and contribution of our public servants. Due in part to their hard work across this country, Canada is emerging from the global recession as one of the world's top-performing advanced economies.

Moving forward, public service skill and expertise will be helpful in streamlining government operations and programs to ensure value for taxpayer money. We salute them. We salute all those Canadians who serve in our public service.

Routine Proceedings

● (1500)

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I rose in the House to bring to light the fact that members of the Castillo Olivares family, who fled their country because of death threats, would be kicked out of Canada on June 15. Nothing has happened since I made that speech. If nothing is done, they will be deported to Mexico in two days.

Can the minister stay the removal order for one month in order to allow the children to finish the school year and the family to complete preparations for their deportation?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Privacy Act, a minister is not authorized to publicly comment on a specific case without permission from those involved. So I encourage any member who has concerns about a specific case to raise them with me in private so that I can provide them with answers.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Nathalie Morin and her three children have been held against their will for over five years now in Saudi Arabia by her husband, the children's father. Unfortunately, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is ignoring the situation. The government's responses to this matter are unacceptable. The minister claims that Saudi laws prevent him from taking any action. Given the department's failure to act, last Friday the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion calling on the federal government to bring Nathalie Morin and her children back to Canada.

Rather than holding more pointless meetings, will the Minister of Foreign Affairs exert the necessary diplomatic pressure to bring Nathalie Morin back—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the motion passed by the Government of Quebec.

Consular officials continue, as I said, to support Ms. Morin in resolving the situation. However, I would advise the House that we are bound by both Saudi law and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, under which the children cannot leave the country without the consent of both parents.

We will continue to work on this case. We do hope for a positive resolution.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's public report for 2009-10.

* * *

FAIR AND EFFICIENT CRIMINAL TRIALS ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials).

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104(1) and 114(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of committees of the House and if the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this report later today.

* * *

CANADA EVIDENCE ACT

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-207, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act (interpretation of numerical dates).

He said: Mr. Speaker, legal documents sometimes state the day, the month and the year, other times the year, the month and the day, and sometimes the month, the day and the year. We need to be consistent and that is why I am honoured to stand in Parliament to reintroduce my private member's bill to amend the Canada Evidence Act. This bill would amend the Canada Evidence Act to direct courts on how to interpret a numeric date that is in dispute.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

SUPREME COURT ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-208, An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages).

He said: I would like to thank the hon. member for Gatineau who has seconded my bill.

This is not the first time I have introduced this bill in the House of Commons. As members know, I am very persistent and I tell myself that one day it will happen. This bill would ensure that future Supreme Court judges will be chosen from among candidates who understand both French and English without the help of an interpreter. I believe that everyone should be equal before the law and should have the right, without distinction, to equal protection in law in both of the country's official languages.

I call upon members from all parties, all senators and the people of Canada to support this bill so that every Canadian is treated more fairly before the Supreme Court.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-209, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Sackville — Eastern Shore.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the absolute pleasure of representing one of the most historic communities in Canada, the Preston community, which, for the information of the House, is the largest indigenous black population in all of Canada. These people trace their roots all the way back to Mathieu Da Costa. They are in the geographical centre of my riding and, thus, they have asked if they can change the name of the electoral district to Sackville—Preston—Eastern Shore not only in honour of the community but also the geographical centre they are in.

I look forward to quick passage and support from all members of Parliament on this very important piece of legislation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-210, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (members who cross the floor).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Winnipeg Centre for seconding this bill.

On behalf of all of us here in the House of Commons, I would note that we are elected under a particular banner or as independents. This is not a no-tell motel where we can check in under an assumed name. This carpet between us is very expensive and wears out when people consistently cross the floor.

This particular legislation would restrict members of Parliament from crossing the floor. If members have a falling out with their party, they could easily quit, seek the nomination of the new party they wish to join and go back to their constituents and seek their consent if they wish to fly under a new banner.

That is democracy, and we are hoping for quick passage of this important legislation which, by the way, I have been trying to get through since 1999.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Routine Proceedings

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to this House earlier today, be concurred in. This report concerns the membership of committees of the House.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House for the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe we will have the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That, in relation to the debate on government business number 1 regarding Canada's involvement in the NATO-led mission in Libya, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, at the conclusion of the time provided for Government Orders on Tuesday, June 14, 2011, the Speaker shall forthwith put, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the motion.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here signed by thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon the House to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial causes combined. Yet they further point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world, and they note that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, a move that they call "corporate welfare for corporate serial killers". They also point out that Canada is blocking international efforts to curb its use.

The Budget

Therefore, these petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for any asbestos workers who may be laid off; to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad; and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the United Nations' Rotterdam Convention.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present petitions on an issue that is of grave concern to residents of British Columbia, the protection of B.C.'s waters from an oil disaster.

The petition points out that the proposed Enbridge northern gateway pipeline would carry oil from the Alberta tar sands to the coast of Kitimat. This project would bring more than 225 supertankers the size of the Empire State Building to the north coast of B.C. each year.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to acknowledge the 1972 moratorium on oil tanker traffic off B.C.'s coast and strongly urge the Government of Canada to immediately legislate the moratorium on offshore drilling and oil tanker traffic on B.C.'s coast.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 52(2), asking leave to propose an emergency debate on the closure by the Government of Canada of the marine search and rescue coordination centres in St. John's and Quebec City.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec are still in shock over the decision to reduce the ability of these marine coordinating centres to do the work that they do in saving lives.

There is a failure of the government to consider the continuing need for the centres because they provide the necessary local knowledge of the conditions, and in the case of Quebec City, as was pointed out during question period, the knowledge of the language to be able to respond immediately to requests for coordination of rescue.

They have been called call centres and dispatch centres. These are rescue coordination centres. Experienced Coast Guard officers with many years of dealing with these instances are dealing with matters of life and death.

The government is moving with undue haste with respect to these centres. I understand that notices have already gone out. The

government is moving very quickly before there can be proper consideration and debate of this issue.

We think this meets the conditions for the need of an emergency debate, to hear more information about the matters, including information that has come to light since then. And much more will come, as to the actual life-saving capacity of these centres because of the quick action and local knowledge that they have of the areas in which they serve.

This is something that is of grave importance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been struggling to improve search and rescue facilities and ability. This is a backward step.

It needs an emergency debate by this House pursuant to Standing Order 52(2).

• (1515)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for bringing this matter before the House's attention. I do not find that it meets the requirements for an emergency debate at this time.

I will point out that we have had several days of debate on the budget and other similar items. There are two opposition days coming up before the end of this particular portion of the session, so perhaps there will be some time to raise this issue then.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier was in the process of questions and comments when question period started.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Portage—Lisgar today.

I am honoured to address the House this afternoon and wish to thank the voters of Brampton—Springdale for allowing me to represent them here in the House as part of a strong and stable Conservative majority government.

The hard-working people of Brampton—Springdale welcome the reintroduction of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, no differently than the rest of Canada. The people of Brampton were affected by the global economic downturn. The recession affected Bramptonians from all walks of life, including seniors, families, small business owners and new Canadians.

The Budget

However, under the leadership and direction of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Canada's economic action plan has helped Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This initiative helped create—

The Speaker: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the hon. member during his speech, but I must remind him that it is inappropriate to use proper names when referring to colleagues. He should use riding names or titles.

Mr. Parm Gill: The city of Brampton, like many other Canadian cities, was fortunate to receive direct benefits from the economic action plan. Thousands of jobs were created in the city and unemployment rates fell.

The partnership between the Government of Canada and the city of Brampton resulted in the revitalization of Chinguacousy Park, the development of Mount Pleasant Mobility Hub, and the renovation of nine recreation centres. These projects have allowed Bramptonians to witness the success of the economic action plan in their own backyards. Even with strong accolades and growing support, the global recovery remains very fragile and too many deserving Canadians are still looking for work.

The Government of Canada continues to focus on several key areas to help Canadians, their families and our economy. This low tax plan for job creation and growth will be instrumental for cities such as Brampton.

For instance, the city of Brampton has a large manufacturing base. This budget extends the accelerated capital cost allowance, which will help manufacturers make these investments in new machinery and equipment.

The riding of Brampton—Springdale is home to many small and medium-size businesses that help contribute to our local economy. These businesses will directly benefit from numerous initiatives within our new budget to retain workers and increase job opportunities.

Further, this budget provides a one time credit of up to \$1,000 to encourage additional hiring, providing incentives to companies to create more job prospects. Our tradespeople and students will also benefit from the decision to extend the tax relief for skilled certification exams and doubling the in-study income exemption. This will allow more young Bramptonians to attend school, pay for tuition and receive their credentials quicker.

The budget has focused not only on businesses but has placed emphasis on our youth who are undertaking schooling that will prepare them for well-paying jobs as they progress into the future.

The city of Brampton has benefited tremendously from the gas tax fund for municipalities. Brampton has received millions of dollars from this program, which has then been invested and allocated to transit initiatives. Our budget puts into law the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns to support infrastructure priorities.

Seniors across Canada were placed in difficult positions during the recession. I have spoken with numerous groups of seniors throughout my riding who have told me that they have trouble making ends meet. Thankfully, the government's budget helps

provide the much needed tax relief that these hard-working Canadians deserve.

Eligible low income seniors living in Brampton—Springdale will receive an additional annual benefit of up to \$600 for a single senior and \$840 for couples. Low income Bramptonian seniors will be provided with assistance to ensure that they live a life of dignity not financial stress.

Families throughout Brampton—Springdale will be provided with several tax relief options. The new children's arts tax credit will allow for up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, cultural, recreational and development activities. Brampton—Springdale has a growing youth population and this tax credit will allow more families to enrol their children in activities.

These strong tax relief initiatives build on numerous actions by our government to support families since 2006, which now save a typical Brampton family on average \$3,000 a year.

The Government of Canada will provide \$20 million to promote programs that help youth resist or exit gangs. Brampton has seen a dramatic rise in gang activities and youth violence over the years. This investment will help communities like ours develop strong partnership programs that provide young Canadians alternatives to a gang lifestyle. This tremendously benefits our families and our children while promoting a safe community for everyone to enjoy.

• (1520)

Many new Canadians decide to make my riding their new home. However, many immigrants have trouble with recognition of their credentials. Fortunately, and applauded by new Canadians in Brampton—Springdale, the government will introduce a streamlined immigration system that will better respond to the needs of the labour market and will develop a common approach to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials.

Also HRSD Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada will test ways to help foreign trained workers to cover these costs, giving new Canadians brighter opportunities.

I am also very pleased to announce that the mayor of Brampton, Susan Fennell, has applauded a benefit Brampton has received through the economic action plan and is very eager to work closely with the government, which has a clear plan to tackle Canada's municipal infrastructure deficit and provide cities with the resources necessary to deliver the programs and services that residents expect.

Cities are the economic engines of our country, and as our economy continues to recover, Canada needs strong, healthy cities with quality infrastructure to create jobs to complete globally. The mayor of Brampton is thankful that our government has recognized these priorities.

The Budget

As the member of Parliament for Brampton—Springdale, I am proud to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It directly benefits families, children, seniors, new Canadians, and businesses in my community.

I look forward to work alongside Bramptonians as a member of a government that is focused on creating jobs, relieving financial stress, and providing the assistance every hard-working Canadian deserves.

• (1525)

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on a very thought-provoking and encouraging presentation of budget 2011.

I am wondering if he could expand for us the effect that our economic action plan has had in terms of creating jobs in his riding. We know now that 580,000 jobs have been created since July 2009. Could the hon. member comment on the effects that the economic action plan and these job creation programs have had on his riding?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on her re-election.

As I mentioned in my speech, Brampton—Springdale has a huge base of small and medium-sized businesses, and as our government in the last number of years has managed to reduce the tax burden on small and medium-sized businesses, it has really helped boost our economy and create jobs at the local level.

Whenever I go around, I talk to small and medium-sized businesses. All my constituents are very thankful for the approach that the Canadian government has taken and the help that the government has provided.

This budget and the next phase of our economic action plan means a lot. I am regularly getting many phone calls and emails congratulating the government and the Minister of Finance for doing such a wonderful job in the last number of years, and especially for the budget that was presented last week.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to describe a typical family in Lac-Saint-Charles. This family has just had its fifth child, the father is unemployed and they do not have the means to send the children to private classes or schools or to sign them up for extra-curricular activities, in order to be eligible for the child tax breaks.

Could the hon. member tell us how these children will benefit from the new budget? The \$100 the government wants to add will be taxable. Even the \$100 that the government will give to families for one child will be taxable come income tax time. What will be left for our poor families?

[English]

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite on her election.

As a father of three children myself, a \$100 child tax benefit means a lot, not just for myself, but I believe for all Canadians. They all appreciate it. When I go around to speak to my constituents in my

riding, people really do appreciate it, along with the other tax initiatives the government has increased.

We all know that since 2005, an average family now saves approximately \$3,000 in taxes, along with the reduction in the GST and a number of other tax initiatives to help families make ends meet.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by congratulating you on your election as the Speaker of this House. I also want to congratulate all members of Parliament, those who are newly elected, as well as those who have been re-elected to Parliament.

I also give a huge thanks to the people of Portage—Lisgar. It is an honour to represent them here in Ottawa and to be able to serve them in the riding. They have given me a very strong mandate. Personally, I had 76% of plurality in my riding and, therefore, thank the people of Portage—Lisgar for that support.

I also thank the volunteers because an effort like that never happens without tremendous volunteers who help me. I especially thank my official agent, Scott Beattie, who did a tremendous job in his role. I also thank my staff who has worked so hard over the last several years: Victoria Bendle, Teresa Friesen, Brittany Saunders, Laura Moran and Colleen Kyle. I thank them for all of their help and support.

Finally, I thank my family, especially my children. As all of us know, it is our families that, many times, sacrifice the most. I thank my children, Lukas, Delaney and Parker, so much for their love and support. I also must wish a happy 17th birthday to Delaney who had her birthday yesterday.

I am pleased to take a few moments to speak to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, budget 2011, a low tax plan for jobs and growth.

As we all know, during 2008, a deep recession hit all of us, with virtually no country in the world being untouched. It was a recession that had the ability to destroy countries, and certainly there are countries that are still feeling the effects and are still trying to come out from underneath the deep recession of 2008.

However, we can proudly and gratefully say that Canada became a beacon. Canada became a ray of hope and a light. The reason for that was that Canada had a government, and has a government, that refused to put politics ahead of the interests of the Canadian people. We also came out of that recession because Canadian people stood tall, stood proud, worked hard and were tenacious. Because of that, we were able to come out of the 2008 recession stronger than ever.

In 2008, our government introduced Canada's economic action plan, a plan that included spending when spending was needed to help create jobs and a plan that included restraint when that was required. The economic action plan did work and it continues to work.

In fact, as I have already mentioned, I had 540,000 jobs written down but I had to change it to 560,000 new jobs created since July 2009.

The Budget

Our housing market is stable, our dollar is strong and Canadians are hopeful for the future.

On May 2, Canadians gave this Conservative government a strong and solid mandate to move ahead with the next phase of our economic action plan, which is exactly what budget 2011 does. It is the kind of prudent fiscal management Canadians have come to expect from our Conservative government. It is a back-to-basics plan that will keep Canada's economy on track and disciplined as we work to balance the budget by 2015.

I am so grateful for the mayors, the reeves, the farmers, the producers, the businesspeople and the mums and dads, the everyday Canadians in my riding and across the country who came out to town hall meetings and who met with me over coffee shop meetings to give me their ideas and give ideas to our government on the economic action plan.

There are so many great parts of this budget but I will highlight a few of the areas that really are benefiting and are very important to my riding.

One of those areas is agriculture. Some of the best crops in the world are produced in the riding of Portage—Lisgar. We have some of the best vegetables in the world, some of the best livestock, the best grain and the best edible beans and pulse crops. Agriculture is a very important part of my riding and, indeed, all of Canada.

Budget 2011 recognizes that to maintain the global competitiveness of the Canadian agricultural sector, we must constantly be looking for opportunities to grow, adapt and innovate. To ensure that Canadian producers remain on the cutting edge of science and technology, budget 2011 announced a two year, \$50 million agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and transfer and increased commercialization of agricultural innovations. This initiative will have a positive effect on producers across Canada and especially in my home in Manitoba.

• (1530)

The Grain Growers of Canada, which I have so much respect and gratitude for the work it does on behalf of producers, said:

...are also pleased with the announcement of a \$50 million fund for research and innovation. ... Farmers from across Canada have lobbied aggressively for the Government to invest in this area, and they have heard us.

Indeed, that is what this Conservative government does: we listen. We listen to our constituents. We listened to farmers and we have given them what they have asked for in order to have more successful businesses.

I am also very pleased that our government has indicated that we will be giving farmers choice when it comes to marketing their grain. This is an opportunity for a win-win. I believe that those in this country who support the Wheat Board can move ahead with this but there are also western farmers who want choice and they should be allowed choice. Instead of making this a political game or issue, which it has been, I encourage all sides, the Wheat Board supporters and the choice supporters, to work together. The monopoly will end but the Wheat Board does not need to end. This is something I believe in, our government believes in and western farmers support.

Another issue that I have heard a lot on from my constituents is reducing the deficit and cutting the fat from government. One of the reasons Canadians gave this Conservative government a strong mandate is because we understand that every dollar spent is a taxpayers' dollars and their dollars must be respected and used wisely. Returning to a balanced budget is the cornerstone of budget 2011. Part of the plan includes doing a strategic and operating review to cut inefficiencies and improve productivity.

I have travelled around to many businesses in my riding and businesses do this all the time, some on a daily basis. They go through their operations to see where they can become more efficient and take even the smallest step to cut waste. If we ask businesses and families to do this, our government should be doing the same thing. We should be looking for fat and waste in the system, eliminating it and finding ways to do the business of nation as efficiently and effectively as possible.

That brings me to my next point, which is our commitment to end political subsidies. They have been a huge fat in the system. I am pleased to see that our Conservative government is taking action and phasing out the per-vote subsidies for political parties. We have always been opposed to forcing taxpayers to support political parties that they may not necessarily believe in. There is no excuse for political parties not to be raising their own money instead of forcing the taxpayers to pay their bill. I may be wrong, and if I am I look forward to being proven wrong, but there seems to be an aversion by some opposition parties to get out and pound the pavement, speak to their constituents, speak to the people who support them and actually raise funds.

As a political organizer and someone who has done a lot of work talking to people who supported Conservative initiatives, even before I was elected as a member of Parliament, there is no greater satisfaction than when people come up to any one of us to say that they support what we are doing, support our policy and give us a cheque for \$25 to help along the way. That is so gratifying and we appreciate people who are so generous. However, people should not be forced to take their tax dollar and put it into a political party against their will.

I think there will come a day when the political parties that do not believe in this, the opposition, will probably thank us. It will make them become closer to their constituents and actually have to create policies that people will agree with. It is a good policy, it is good for democracy and it is good for all Canadians.

The Budget

There are so many more things that I could speak to but I see that my time is running out. We are supporting families, seniors and volunteer firefighters. I have heard so much from the firefighters across my riding, which is a huge riding of 14,000 square kilometres. We have wonderful volunteer firefighters who are professional. The kind of service that some firefighters are giving in cities, my rural people are getting from the firefighters in Portage—Lisgar. That is another fantastic initiative.

I encourage all members to support this budget. It is a good economic action plan. Let us work together for the good of all Canadians.

• (1535)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague went into a discussion on the per-vote subsidy and said that taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize parties that they do not agree with.

I think the basic principle of the per-vote subsidy is one that says that if someone voted for that particular party then that particular party will get \$1.75 a year. The voters, or the taxpayers, get the choice of who will receive the dollars from the federal government. The voters make that choice. They are given more opportunities and more reasons to vote for their particular party and engage in the process because, if they do not, then the particular party that they would support would not get the subsidy.

How is it against the democratic principle to say, “I vote, therefore the party I vote for will receive \$1.75?” To my mind, the argument that my hon. colleague has made is one that is not logical and not straightforward.

• (1540)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to explain. The hon. member is actually incorrect. The funding that goes to political parties comes out of general revenue, and that is from all the taxpayers in Canada. It does not just come out of some pot that is generated after an election.

I would encourage my hon. colleague to get out there, speak with his constituents and tell them about his policies. If they agree with him, maybe they will write him a cheque. However if they do not, they should not be forced.

Overwhelmingly, Canadians agree with this. They do not believe that taxpayers should be paying for political parties. Canadians have given us a strong mandate and we will be moving that forward.

However, my hon. colleague needs to know that it does come out of general revenue. It is not some little pot of money that is put aside just from the voters.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague a question.

The member comes from a rural community similar to mine in many respects. My constituents have never come up to me and said that they believe that they should be forced to fund my political party or any other political parties.

In fact, coming from a rural area, the things my constituents talk to me about are more support for nurses and doctors coming to rural and underserved communities, support for our volunteer firefighters

and support for our senior citizens who are having a difficult time making ends meet. These are the priorities of my constituents.

I wonder if the hon. member heard similar pleas from her constituents when she was campaigning.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, living in a rural area, rural doctors are a challenge. I am hearing overwhelming support for our initiative and for our commitment to encouraging doctors and nurses to go into underserved areas, which are certainly rural areas. We are encouraging them to do that by writing off a very good portion of their tuition.

We have no doubt that when they settle in these communities, areas in my riding like Morden, Winkler and Altona, Manitoba, wonderful communities with so much to offer, these doctors and nurses will stay. That is what our government wants to do. We do not believe in a top-down approach. We believe that when people get out and get to enjoy living in these rural communities, doctors and nurses will stay.

We are giving practical solutions that we know will work.

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Québec.

I am very pleased today to be finally taking the time to properly thank the voters of Honoré-Mercier and my family. I especially would like to congratulate them for their courage and explain to the members of this House what I mean by courage.

It is true that a wave of hope and enthusiasm swept across Quebec and Canada during the election. There was a true desire for change that benefited the NDP candidates, the bearers of modern, fair and effective ideas and solutions.

It is also true that this wave was created by the hard work of our leader, supporters and MPs who, in the past 50 years, have built the reputation of the NDP. This wave was fuelled the work of supporters, candidates and volunteers in the ridings, who increased their efforts during the campaign.

For me, this election has an additional meaning. The fact that I am here before you today says a great deal about the evolution of Canadian society. Although some people's right to vote is still an issue elsewhere in the world, here, many women from visible minorities were elected under the banner of the NDP.

When the voters of Honoré-Mercier put an X on their ballots beside the name of Paulina Ayala, they knew very well that they were voting for a Latin-American woman. I salute their courage; they were not afraid. That is the state of Canadian society, a society that is no longer afraid to accept differences, to choose representatives from minorities, and to share the benefits of Canadian democracy equitably.

The Budget

Fear could have been enough to stop the wave or diminish its force. Naturally, some were counting on this fear of change which, at the last minute, can paralyze the collective imagination and maintain the status quo. But fear did not grip Quebec voters. On the contrary, attempts to frighten the population led to a backlash. Voters were united in their rejection of politics that would deny the modernity of Canadian society—a society that is complex, diversified and unique and does not settle for imitating its neighbours or isolating itself from part of the world.

Therefore, I thank and congratulate the voters of Honoré-Mercier for their courage and for overcoming the intimidation, prejudice and tactics. They did their part in the election of young people, women, immigrants and aboriginal people, who will greatly enrich Canadian democracy. I am proud to have been carried here by this wave of modernity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say hello to my dear friends, the students at Henri-Bourassa secondary school in north Montreal. They have always inspired me with their curiosity, their pertinent and sometimes incisive questions, and their ability to debate and to express their often well-informed opinions.

I was very passionate about my career as a history teacher, because it was for them, my students, whether in Chile or Canada, that I threw myself into this new calling. I taught history to young people because I wanted to help them understand that the past sheds light on the present. This will help them take control of their future and find their place in tomorrow's society. Young people are optimistic about their future. They are aware of the challenges that lie ahead regarding the environment, social equality, protecting democracy, respect for diversity and promoting distinctness. They want to help us overcome these challenges, but we have to listen to them.

I have talked about these issues many times and at great length with young people. They inspired me to be the best teacher I could be. They also inspired me to get into politics. They were among the first to believe in me. Since I often told them the importance of getting involved in society, they are the ones who said to me, "You talk to us about democracy and social involvement. We agree, and we think you should also get involved. You should go into politics." So then I went back and told them I was running. The pride I felt from having lived up to their expectations and ambitions is what kept me going during the campaign.

Young people expect us to make wise decisions on their behalf. I accept that responsibility. That is my real mission here. I would say to all my colleagues that the choices we make today will mainly affect young people, who will be quick to judge our actions.

As the first Chilean woman to be elected to the House of Commons, I feel it is my duty to remind the members of a bit of history and highlight the important ties that bind Chile and Canada.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every Canadian who supported the rebuilding of democracy in my country without the use of force or military intervention. By supporting civil organizations, Canadians allowed my people to stand up by themselves, to take democracy into their own hands, to organize themselves nationally and internationally and, finally, to reach their goal. That is how

today's Chile was built, with the pride of a job well done. If not for international support that was respectful of the people's values and goals, Chile might still be a dictatorship today.

Canada's foreign policy should be guided by this type of example as the government chooses where and how it will intervene. Supporting civil society, not using military force to intervene, will ensure success for democracy and international peace.

• (1545)

The battles that I fought in my country have shown me the true value of democracy and respect for human rights. I will do anything to protect these fundamental values for all Canadians and to remind everyone that torture is shameful, that peace is not built with weapons, and that support and assistance for civil society will allow a country to evolve.

I would like to remind the hon. members that the American continent, including the Caribbean, is made up of 51 countries. It includes more than 800 million people as well as countless cultures and languages that share a history as well as geography. This physical reality links the destinies of all the peoples who live here. A continent such as ours cannot develop only on the basis of trade and the movement of goods and services. That is a short-term view. Ideas and ambitions must also move freely. Individuals must enjoy their neighbours' respect and welcome as they move about.

Thus, people who want to contribute to the evolution of our Canadian culture ought to be welcome. Unfortunately, the reality is that temporary visa applicants are often perceived as opportunists, liars who claim to want to visit our country, but secretly plan to stay in Canada without satisfying the eligibility criteria. Canadians can travel, visit and discover, but Latin Americans have to prove their attachment to their country of origin. They have to pay for their visa application, which is often denied and never refunded.

While it is true that bureaucracy complicates the visa granting process, the primary problem is that there is a certain culture of doubt, which, for the applicants, is seen as contempt. This culture hurts people and responds to them with uncertainty and far too often with rejection. For all proud and well-meaning individuals, this experience tarnishes their image of Canada.

As soon as the government determines that the visa applicant's situation is technically less than advantageous in his country of origin, an official can decide that the visa application is misleading, a Trojan horse meant to infiltrate Canadian society and take advantage of all the benefits it has to offer.

There is the recent example of the ballet theatre troupe from Haiti, a group of artists who were applying for a visa to tour in Quebec and Canada. Not only was this a good opportunity for a cultural exchange, but this culturally-based initiative was meant to be a fundraiser for Haiti. Like many artists, the members of this troupe did not have an economic profile that was deemed satisfactory and their visas were denied. There are many examples like that one.

It is time for this to change. It is time to build relationships based on respect and trust. It is time to build one America from north to south. It is time to live up to our standards as a society based on the right of law. It is time to see the good in people, especially our neighbours.

The Budget

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has had an interesting journey on her way to the House. Her background, in terms of what she brings to the House, is interesting.

She did talk a bit about trade. One of the things that will spur on our economic action plan is trade with other countries, fair and balanced trade deals, each of which we will bring to the House. We have set up a very aggressive trade agenda that we want to pursue over the next couple of years.

Considering that not only builds wealth for Canada, but also wealth for the countries we trade with, can we count on her support and dialogue as we go through those trade discussions?

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala: Mr. Speaker, this dialogue started a while ago and is still going on. I simply focused on Canada's attitude towards people who want to visit the country. Often, a family wants to visit a newborn and is unable to do so. Trade, for its part, is going very well. God knows that we have agreements with many countries. Canada has an extraordinary relationship with Chile. But we must strengthen this relationship in another way, in terms of people, of sharing cultures, and not strictly in terms of economics, because things are going well on that front.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to thank the people of Quebec City for their confidence in me. In the latest election, they rejected what the Conservatives were proposing, and they were justified in doing so. This budget, just like the identical version we saw in March, does not protect their interests. It is true that our country is facing a large and worrisome federal deficit—the largest in its history. The solution proposed by the Conservatives in the Flaherty budget is to cut billions of dollars from government programs and services. The fact that the Conservatives do not even know exactly where these cuts will be made proves that this measure lacks seriousness and transparency. By proceeding in this way, the government will surely—

[English]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I bring the attention of the House to the hon. member's use of the surname of the finance minister. I know the member is new and, as with all of us, we sometimes forget some of the small rules. I thought she might like to know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I thank the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for bringing this to the attention of the Chair. I remind all hon. members that we refer to members by their constituency or title and not by their proper name.

The hon. member for Québec.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, by proceeding in this way, the government will surely increase the burden on the taxpayers, requiring more from the provinces and particularly from the municipalities, which can already barely meet people's needs. That is not the role that the federal government should play. What we are asking the government to do is very simple, and that is to fill in the

gaps rather than making them bigger. Greater investments in community infrastructure would make it possible to both create jobs and improve the lives of Canadians. Rather than doing this, the Conservatives preferred to give \$15 billion in tax giveaways to companies that did not need them.

Why should big business and oil companies profit from the economic recession while the middle class goes deeper into debt? Is it to pay for the government's wrongdoing and mismanagement? Who does this budget really benefit? One thing is clear: it does not benefit middle-class families or the less fortunate.

How can we believe in the budget forecasts of this government when, at the first sign of the economic recession, it promised that Canada would not go into debt and, in the end, it led us into the largest deficit in the history of the country? Each time the government promises to balance the budget but instead it continues to add billions of dollars to the national debt. We have reason to be concerned about this budget, even more so when we analyze its logic.

The Prime Minister said that there would not be a recession or a deficit. He was wrong on both counts. And if he continues on the same track, as the saying goes, things come in threes. I am in favour of economic recovery but please let it be a sustainable economic recovery. In order to achieve this goal, we need a new way of thinking. We can no longer wait to create wealth before distributing it.

Sociologist Paul Bernard said that we need to redistribute wealth in order to create it. That is true. Look at where we are now, over 50 years after implementing universal public education and health care. This would not have been possible had we not made these investments.

I would like to read a quote from an article by Camil Bouchard that appeared in last Friday's edition of *Québec Science*, in which he indicated that OECD studies on this subject are clear. He said:

...it is not so much rising employment that decreases poverty. Rather, this happens when countries invest a considerable proportion of their gross domestic product in social programs or policies.

For example, although the United States and Norway have very high labour force participation rates, the U.S. invests half as much of its GDP in social programs as Norway does. The result is that poverty is five times higher in the United States than in Norway. And that is just one example.

Studies of poor children over many years show that the use of high-quality, educational daycare centres produces healthier, better educated citizens who are better integrated into their community and more active in the labour force and require fewer costly government support services. This strengthens economic productivity and increases government revenue. Given the unprecedented zeal to shrink government, this bears repeating.

I cannot ignore the \$57 million in cuts being made to maritime search and rescue centres, which will directly affect the Quebec City rescue centre. Once again, the Conservatives are on the wrong track with this strategy. By wanting to close service points and decrease administrative costs, the government will instead increase operating costs considerably, since each rescue will become more and more costly. The goal is to maximize response time in order to save lives. It is certain that not only will the government not save money with these cuts, but it will also put lives in danger.

In addition to being responsible for this country's worst economic debt, this government is leaving us the worst social and environmental debt we have ever seen.

My question is this: who will benefit from this budget?

• (1555)

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to welcome a new member to the House and we appreciate her comments.

I would warn the hon. member that we keep records of everything that is said in here, so I would suggest that she be very careful what she says in her speech. I do not see an awful lot of Liberals here today, which I should not reflect on, but in actuality in 1997 the Liberal government, under then Prime Minister Martin, had a debt in today's dollars of \$729 billion. Just to be clear, it was neither her party nor mine that ran up that kind of a debt.

When I reflect on what previous budgets have put forward, we have taken one million low-income Canadians right off the tax roll. We continue to do that by reducing taxes. That is important to my constituents and I am sure it is important to the member's constituents.

The fact is that we are providing forgiveness to doctors and nurses to go to rural communities. I would encourage the hon. member to answer the following question. Is that not a good thing for rural communities?

• (1600)

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I am worried. I heard a member on the other side of the House say that tax cuts equal job creation. I am not so sure about that. I do not think that creating part-time jobs—and the majority of jobs created have been part-time positions—is exactly a good solution and a good way of doing things. I doubt that and would like to make that point.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the Conservative member ask my colleague a question about the government's budgets and such. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts.

The Conservative government is willing to cut taxes for big business, including banks that are making \$20 billion in profits. Bank presidents—important people, of course—are being paid bonuses totalling \$11 billion. Would it not be better to put money into communities, into municipal and town infrastructure, and create jobs locally, instead of giving it to bank presidents and watching them laugh all the way to the bank?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. If that is where all of the cuts are made, if part-time jobs are created and if big business gets favours, jobs risk being uprooted. I also heard my colleague say that things are not going well for Electrolux. We heard that in 2010, Electrolux uprooted jobs after receiving a subsidy from the federal government. And that is what I am saying—this approach concerns me.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, speaking of the budget, I did not see where the government made any changes to employment

insurance. We are talking about poverty. Some 1.4 million children in Canada do not have enough to eat.

The government is asking us to vote for its budget, but would this not have been the appropriate place to make changes to help those in need? Are there really any practical measures to help workers who have lost their jobs? If they are not eligible for employment insurance, who suffers? Their entire family suffers.

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with what my colleague is saying.

On another note, I would like to add that if the government really wanted to make cuts—since it strongly favours cuts to balance the budget—at this time, it could have chosen not to cut subsidies to political parties and instead made cuts to the Senate. The Senate costs so much more and the government could have really saved a lot of money, which is what it wanted.

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am truly delighted to be speaking to this budget. I will be splitting my time with the member for Brant.

As this is only my second time to speak in the House since I was elected, I want to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Vegreville—Wainwright for their tremendous show of support in this past election. There were 80% of the people from my constituency who supported me and that truly is humbling. It played a very important part in giving this side a very stable Conservative government and I am delighted to be a part of that.

I would also like to thank my many volunteers. There were over 300 volunteers who played a very active role in the election process. Many do not only work during election campaigns, but they do a lot of work month to month, year to year, to support a cause that is important to them. In my case, that is the Conservative cause and that is what they and others across the country supported, which led to this very strong majority government. I sincerely thank them for that.

I want to speak a little about agriculture and this budget. Of course, there were things in this budget dealing with agriculture. For example, there was money allocated to have consultations and develop a new growing forward 2 package to replace the current growing forward program. This would allow farmers, people in the agriculture business and those people interested across this country to help develop the next stabilization package.

The package we have has worked pretty well and will form a strong base for the second growing forward package. However, there is always room for improvement and we would get the best results if we have people who are concerned and interested in agriculture taking part in this consultation process. I encourage anyone who would like to see change to get involved in the process which starts almost immediately. I am looking forward to having some input into that process as it goes along.

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As well, budget 2011 focuses on supporting innovation as a way to make agriculture more profitable. I think that is a very wise expenditure of taxpayers' money and we have seen some excellent results in recent years. When we look at taxpayers' money that has been leveraged, often with a vast majority of the money coming from the private sector, we have seen results. This allows Canadian farmers to compete with the world very favourably.

More than that, in many cases we have seen Canadian business, farmers and others export these new ideas and products around the world. That is an important part of developing innovation. Not only are agriculture products produced more efficiently as a result of innovation, but exporting innovation around the world is something that certainly benefits agriculture in Canada.

Much of what our government will do in the area of agriculture over the next year really will not show up in this budget, but that does not mean it is any less important. In fact, if we were to look at one area of work that our government is doing that is more important to farmers than any other area, I have no doubt that would be the area of expanding trade in agriculture products around the world.

We have seen our agriculture minister, trade minister and our Prime Minister take a very hands-on and active approach to help develop new markets for our agriculture products. We have seen remarkable results from that. Unfortunately, the agreements have been signed, but the actual passing of some of these trade agreements in Parliament have been slowed down by opposition, in fact, mostly by the NDP.

● (1605)

I strongly encourage members of the NDP who care about farmers and care about agriculture to work with this government from now on and help pass these trade agreements in Parliament so the benefits can be reaped by farmers as soon as possible. That is something I am looking forward to. Nothing done by this government in the area of agriculture is more important than developing those new markets around the world.

There are far more benefits to be gained. We are looking at negotiating pretty broad agreements with the European Union, which is important. We are always looking at how we can get better access to China, to India, to other places. These bilateral agreements will continue to be important. I would argue they will become even more important in the years to come. That is an extremely important area.

There are other areas involving trade that do not only look at exporting Canadian products to other countries, but rather look at importing inputs that farmers use to grow crops, to raise livestock, all of that kind of thing. This would allow those inputs more freely into Canada so they can be less expensive and so that we can have access to brand new technology, brand new herbicides, pesticides, veterinary products here in Canada at the same time our American, European and Australian competitors have access to these products. That is another aspect of improving trade that is extremely important.

Maybe it is not talked about as much, but we saw benefits from the own use program. That program helped farmers bring in herbicides, pesticides, veterinary products from the United States, which allowed them to lower their costs of producing animals and

crops substantially. That program helped in a very real and substantial way. We have a lot of room to expand that well beyond what it is now. Part of that too is coordination. It has been worked on for many years but much is still to be done on coordinating the approval process for new pesticides, herbicides and veterinary products.

That coordination of the approval process between Canada, the United States, Europe and other like countries that have good processes in place now would mean that our farmers would get access to these products that will help them in a very real way. They will have access much sooner. I am looking forward to our government continuing to work on that.

As well, there are other things in the budget that would help farmers. They are not aimed specifically at farmers, but they would help them.

For example, our program to forgive up to \$40,000 in student loans for doctors who will practise in a rural area would help to give our farmers much better access to a family doctor closer to home. That is a huge problem we face right now. We have done a lot of work in the immigration area. The immigration minister has done some really good things to help speed up the process to get doctors into Canada. Many of those doctors do come to rural areas, but it seems all too often in a few years down the road they move off to cities. We have to try to attract some Canadian trained doctors to rural areas by helping to assist them pay off their loans. We would also pay up to \$20,000 in student loans for nurses.

In my minute remaining I want to let farmers know that now is not the time to sit back and become disengaged from the political process. Now is the ideal time to get involved with our government, with their rural MPs. We actually have most of the rural MPs in the country in our caucus. I would ask our farmers to get involved with their rural MPs to help move some of these things forward. Together we truly can do a lot that would make things better for our farmers and for agriculture. I am looking forward to that in the next four and a half years, which is the guaranteed mandate of this government.

● (1610)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, bad weather is often one of the main problems facing farmers. The second problem is the stress caused by bad weather. That is what we are dealing with right now in Montérégie and what we have faced in the past. Farmers in Montérégie were not able to sow their fields in time this year. These farmers have lost some of the grain that could have been used to feed animals, which translates into a huge financial loss.

Since the hon. member and the government want to do so much for farmers, can the government tell us what it plans to do to help our farmers in the Montérégie region?

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member. Her question is an important one. I have watched on television and heard about the flooding throughout Quebec and Manitoba and my heart goes out to farmers who have had their season of crops destroyed. They simply will not have crops in many areas this year.

That is why I was very pleased when the agriculture minister a couple of years ago added the agrirecovery portion to our stabilization program. That allows the provinces, farmers and municipalities to approach the federal government when they need help because of the flooding and have the government work with them on it. That has worked very well with the flooding in eastern Saskatchewan and Manitoba and in the severe drought in Alberta over the past couple of years. I am confident it will work well for the farmers in the member's riding as well.

• (1615)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear there may be an option for farmers to have a choice for the sale of grain in the future. Could my colleague from Vegreville—Wainwright further explain how this will benefit farmers in his area?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the thing about these various programs and the things our government has done in agriculture is they help farmers right across the country. I speak to farmers almost every day. When I am back in my constituency, I speak to farmers about things that are important to them and they have had an awful lot of good things to say about how this government has worked with them over the past several years.

If trade deals could be negotiated and implemented more quickly in the House, they would play an extremely important role to improve the incomes of farmers in my area. Farmers talk about it and bring it to my attention. They say how much they appreciate what the agriculture minister and trade minister have done. They say what we are doing has been working and they have asked us to do more. We will do more and we will also work on the input side to try to reduce the costs to farmers, to make their costs a little more in line with the Americans, for example, by allowing the inputs to come into Canada so they can use them a bit sooner. It makes a very real difference.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, has the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright shared some of the conversations with farmers that I have experienced?

I was surprised to hear him say that number one on the government's list was expanding trade opportunities. What I hear quite often from farmers is a concern that there is redundant trade. They grow produce locally in Canada and ship it by highway to the U.S. At the same time, trucks from the states bring produce from California back to our stores, while we send good, healthy, local produce to the states.

I also quite often hear from farmers that they are concerned that local food production is being continually undermined by a lack of infrastructure, slaughterhouses and canneries. In other words, there is a lack of support for local food. There is a conflict between the increased globalization of food supply and the public demand for

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safe, local, healthy food and supporting family farmers in Canada. I would appreciate the member's response.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the member may be listening to people mostly in cities. I also heard a concern about moving organic and specialized products in particular into Canadian markets. On the other hand, I have heard success stories from an awful lot of people who had done the work with companies to have their products carried in stores. Quite frankly, many were successful.

However, in my area, I certainly did not hear the concerns she is expressing about opening up the world to more Canadian agriculture products. In fact, most of the constituents I have heard from are asking for that.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is the very first time I rise in the House, I, too, would like to thank the good people of Brant for returning me to the House.

When we come to this place, we are in awe of the history that has gone before us and we are charged with the duty of ensuring we lead the country forward in a fashion that would be prosperous for all Canadians.

Today I will deal with some of the economic realities, globally and locally.

The global economic reality is that Canada stands as a beacon of hope and opportunity in a world of uncertainty. Throughout the last couple of years, our banks did not fail, our finances are currently in order and our economy has grown for the last seven quarters.

Just last week we received more good news. There were 22,000 new jobs in May, which has taken us up to 560,000 new jobs since July 2009. In this context, however, we are well aware that our government is mindful of the fact that many dangers remain in the global economy and that our economic recovery in Canada is still very fragile.

We know that lower taxes on job creators, through new investments in new business and the expanding of enterprises, creates high paying full-time jobs. That is the case in my community. Corporate tax reductions will produce growth and revenue to the government. It is the simple principle of sowing abundantly and reaping abundantly. By expanding our economy with new industry and new jobs, we will have more prosperity, more people paying taxes and more revenue. We know that corporations, in reality, do not pay taxes; they pass them along to consumers.

As a small businessman myself prior to coming to Parliament and being part of a chamber of commerce and knowing a lot of people who do business, businesses have fixed costs. Those fixed costs are translated into the price of the products and services they provide. Therefore, in reality, high taxes end up on the price of goods and services that consumers pay at the end of the day.

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By implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, Canada will be a business-friendly location. To illustrate the point I was previously making, if the grocer is paying 40% tax on his business, when they check out, the consumers pay that 40%. If the grocer's tax is 25%, it is Canadian families that will save and Canadian workers who will benefit.

I invite members to reconsider their position against these taxes and join us in creating what many believe will be a tsunami of investment and opportunity in Canada.

I have seen locally in my community, in the city of Brantford, the benefits of low taxes in creating jobs. A company, Brant Screen Craft, wrote to a local newspaper to explain why it decided to stay in Canada after investigating many other jurisdictions, including primarily Michigan in the United States. The vice-president of the company stated that it was the low tax plans and programs of our government, the ones we had already created, and that the company was planning for in its business plan that kept it in my community of Brantford. It helped the company locate to a new, larger facility and hire 50 new employees. This was last year. It is a story of how our low tax plan has worked and will continue to work to make our Canadian economy the most attractive destination for job creators.

There are other items in our budget that are tremendously beneficial, especially to small businesses. There is the \$1,000 hiring tax credit for a small business. In my case, a businessman who hired and employed 20 to 30 employees, \$1,000 to hire a new employee is a big item, and it will be big for many people in small business.

● (1620)

I have also heard from constituents who are business owners. They have said that the accelerated capital cost allowance is a large item for them because they need to invest in new equipment, new tooling and new machinery in order to take their business to a higher level, get more customers, have more jobs available and grow their businesses.

The work-sharing program has been significant as well. Over 48 local companies identified themselves as participants in the last round of the work-sharing program. I am not talking about a few jobs here. I am talking about thousands of jobs. Our budget extends this program so companies not only can survive, but can again get their business back on the footing it needs to grow and prosper further.

This budget deals with the ineffectiveness of having to overcome red tape in government and the things that slow people down in business, by having to add to their overhead by the policies and regulation they need to submit when they are in small business.

The children's arts tax credit, a new family caregivers tax credit, the extension of the eco-energy program and the enhancements to the GIS for support for seniors are all items in our budget that are helping families in Canada right across the country.

For a moment, I would like to talk about a personal friend who is the Brant County fire chief, Paul Boissonneault. He has strongly advocated for the volunteer firefighters' tax credit. Today, we could deliver to him and his colleagues, the brave men and women who risk their lives fighting for life and safety. We have delivered for the volunteer firefighters.

In education and training we have already invested over \$10 billion for students, including \$3 billion in transfers to the provinces for post-secondary and over \$7 billion in support for students and their families. We are moving forward with a textbook tax credit. We are moving forward to continue to build post-secondary in communities like ours, which has a satellite campus and is growing by leaps and bounds and needs help to increase the enrollment and be more open to allow more students to come.

Also, we talk in the budget about the in-study income exemption increasing to \$100 a week from \$50 a week. In effect, this will help 100,000 students. That is why the Association of Universities and Colleges endorses our budget. I will quote from its statement. It says:

This budget represents tremendous progress for the university sector: more funding for the research councils, promotion of international educational marketing, additional support for students, and a range of measures to foster innovation and research.

Through this budget, our government is preserving Canada's fiscal advantage. Today, Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 by far. In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will keep Canada on track to balance the federal budget. We are delivering savings from our 2010 strategic reviews, closing tax loopholes and launching a one year government-wide strategic and operating review.

As I have said, Canada's economy is fast becoming the envy of the world and our Conservative government is focused on keeping that progress on track. Our plan has worked to help Canada emerge from the global recession and it has worked to support our local economy in my riding.

I would like to extend an invitation to entrepreneurs worldwide to call me. I will give them a personal tour of our beautiful industrial parks in Brant, where we have plenty of fully serviced land, access to utilities and transport routes and a hard-working labour force ready to go to work.

● (1625)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my new colleague for his excellent address on small businesses and their workings in Brant.

However, I would like to point out to him that I attended a breakfast here at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in March. Its economist said quite clearly that lowering corporate taxes was not the incentive that businesses use worldwide for locating in particular places. That was said very clearly.

As well, the other point I would like to make is that most of the corporate taxes paid in Canada are paid by corporations that are exploiting resources traded in world markets. Therefore, those prices are not changed by the tax rate.

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For a corporation producing oil in this country and selling it at a world market price, the corporate tax rate does not change the cost of that oil to the consumer. There is no change to that cost, because it is a world market price. In Canada, therefore, the largest sum of corporate tax breaks does not pass down to the consumer.

I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that.

• (1630)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, basic economics and business 101 tells us that the final end cost of products and services is the fixed and variable costs that go into them, which can fluctuate. I disagree categorically with his analysis that the prices of oil and other raw materials and finished goods do not reflect those actual costs.

For some reason there is a thought in the ideology of the NDP and the socialist ideology that assumes that it is all about businesses and companies making bigger and bigger profits and putting those into the pockets of fat cat shareholders. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

If one thinks about the 80% of jobs created by small and medium size businesses, and if one thinks about all of the inputs of the farming community and small time contractors and other people in my community, nothing could be further from the truth. They have to remain competitive in the world marketplace, as all businesses do.

I would kindly ask the member to reconsider his thinking about how businesses operate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the member's comments when he talked about the small businesses in his community. I truly appreciate that.

In fact, the Liberal Party of Canada supports small businesses in many different ways, more so obviously than the Conservative Party, in the sense that the Conservative Party has put its priorities in favour of corporations. It demonstrated that in the budget with the amount of tax money it is giving to large corporations, with a smaller percentage allocated in different ways to small business in the budget.

Would the government not have been better off giving more of those tax breaks to the businesses providing 80% of the jobs in the communities the member made reference to, thereby creating more opportunities for the constituency he represents, as opposed to these large corporate tax cuts?

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, but again it is somewhat misleading in its characterization of large companies benefiting all of a sudden. The feedback from my business peers in my community has been right across the board that small, medium and large scale businesses are benefiting from our plans.

Take a look at the employment numbers. If 80% of the small and medium size businesses are creating 560,000 jobs, then that ratio implies that a smaller number of jobs are being created by the large corporations. However, we want to ensure as well that those large corporations are kept in this country, because they could quickly evaporate into other jurisdictions or parts of the world if we did not have a competitive tax rate for them as well.

The majority of the jobs I just referred to were created by small and medium size business.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Aerospace Industry; the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, Employment; the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, National Defence.

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

First of all, I wish to congratulate you today on your election as Speaker of the House. It is important to note that you are the youngest Speaker in the history of Canadian politics. Thus, you are a fine representative of this new, younger Parliament.

I am honoured today to thank the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île for the trust they have placed in me. I will always listen to everyone, and I will tirelessly defend their interests each day. I promise in this House to do everything I can to help families, youth, workers and seniors, and to prove that the NDP is there for them and not for big business and the banks, as is the case with this government.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the outgoing member for my riding. She devoted 17 years to the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île, and I intend on doing the same.

We are all here for the same reasons: our passion for the people of our community and our devotion to serving the interests of our constituents. On May 2, some 4.5 million Canadians expressed their desire for change, to live in a Canada where families come first and where everyone has an equal chance, a Canada that Quebecers can identify with and that reflects their social and progressive values.

I am extremely proud to have had the opportunity to be part of this wave of change that millions of Quebecers and Canadians were looking for. I accept the mandate that was given to me to represent the interests of families, young people, workers and seniors, to make them a priority, and to criticize the government, which continues to give tax credits to corporations and put the interests of the oil companies ahead of the interests of Canadians. I am committed to working with all the hon. members of the House in order to achieve tangible results because I truly care about the issues affecting the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île and they are the issues we focused on during the election campaign.

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A big part of the population in my riding is aging and we must work on preventing seniors from living in poverty. We must offer them affordable housing and we must support them financially to give them a decent standard of living. The budget states that seniors living alone who get a maximum income supplement of \$2,000 will receive an additional \$600 a year. How can the government claim that a person living below the poverty line can be lifted out of destitution with just \$600 more? Again according to the budget, this credit will decrease as their income increases. When a senior living alone gets an annual income supplement of \$4,400, they can no longer benefit from the bonus the government is proposing in its 2011-12 budget. It makes no sense. Seniors need faster and more accessible health care, because they are among the most vulnerable in our society. They also need to have peace of mind and know that they can get the medicine they need.

The budget also includes a number of tax credits, but what good is a tax credit to a person who is not employed or who does not pay tax because of a very low income?

Let us speak about families. Tax credits to promote the participation of children in physical, arts and cultural activities is a good government initiative but one that does not take into account the many people in my riding and throughout Quebec who do not appear to have the means to pay for their children to participate in such activities. How can these families benefit from a tax credit if they do not have the money to pay for their children to participate in such activities? These tax credits also do not take into account the 30% of the Montreal population who paid barely any taxes, if any at all, last year. These families will not benefit from the tax credits proposed by this government.

Families need to have access to family doctors if only to free up the system and waiting rooms. This government could help to improve the Quebec health care system by investing more money so that Quebecers could then train more workers.

This government's budget does not invest in social housing and does not take into account the reality of thousands of Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1635)

The government must understand that it is urgent to develop a plan to give families, seniors and everyone access to affordable housing so that they do not have to worry about choosing between paying their rent and feeding their children or themselves. More and more families and seniors are using food banks, which is unacceptable. The government must act now. Why is this government continuing to decrease the taxes of big businesses, oil companies and banks? As a result, billions of dollars that could have been spent on Canadians are lost. Then, the government announces billions of dollars in cuts that directly affect Canadians. That is money that could easily come from the \$100 billion in profit that the oil companies make each year.

The government is abandoning millions of unemployed workers and is not really investing in job creation. The budget does not include any plans for job creation. For example, the refinery and petrochemical industries in Quebec are in decline, which is resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs, among other things. This government prefers to export most of its crude oil to the United

States. In my riding, the result is the closure of the Shell refinery. In addition to causing the loss of thousands of jobs, this is making us dependent on other countries for our energy, since we are forced to import gasoline from them.

When it comes to the environment, the Conservative government's budget continues to cut millions of dollars from the fight against climate change and from environmental protection. Canada's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are still among the highest in the world. This government's attitude continues to separate it from the international community. In fact, in 2009, a coalition of scientists and politicians lobbied to have Canada kicked out of the Commonwealth because of its deficient environmental policies. The air quality in my riding is the worst on the island of Montreal. My constituents are worried about the environment and their health. The government must take action and must get its priorities in line with those of Quebecers and Canadians.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has approved the shipping of nuclear waste, specifically waste from nuclear reactors, on the St. Lawrence River. Such shipments could directly affect the people of my riding. The government needs to intervene to prevent the shipping of this waste and instead invest in finding solutions for disposing of the waste near where it is produced.

The government must stop justifying its deficient and non-existent policies by the fact that it now has a majority. I would remind the House that only 40% of Canadians voted for this government. It must be accountable to Canadians and act in their interests, rather than in the interests of the multinationals and banks.

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on her election and her fabulous first speech in the House of Commons. I have to share with the House that after meeting the member, her enthusiasm cannot help but brush off on one.

I welcome all of the young members to this House, particularly for their great verve and enthusiasm.

During the period when I was elected in 2008 and during my involvement in the election, I have heard a lot of concerns from youth in my riding, where I have three university campuses. The youth have expressed great concern about the record rate of youth and student unemployment in the last summer; the imbalance in federal investment and support for one side of the economy and not for the other, that being the massive subsidies to the oil and gas sector, benefiting the economy to a certain extent in my province but raising concerns about the long-term costs and liabilities; and they expressed a lot of interest in getting into the renewable energy and energy efficiency sector.

I wonder if the member could share some of the input and thoughts she received from her constituents about youth and future employment, and about the economies of the future in terms of renewable energy and energy conservation.

*The Budget**[Translation]*

Ms. Ève Péclet: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for her question. I am very interested in the issues of education and youth unemployment. Post-secondary education rates in my riding are amongst the lowest on the island of Montreal. The problem is that the government continues to give loans and grants to students, who then find themselves with debt they cannot repay because they are not able to find work in their field. The NDP is not looking to hand out loans and grants. We want to reduce tuition fees to allow more people to study and find work in an area they love.

In terms of renewable energy, a balance needs to be struck. We need oil now, obviously, but the government is making Quebec and Canada dependent on other countries because we cannot benefit from the profits generated by our own production. We cannot reinvest that money because we must import oil from other countries. We cannot—

• (1645)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North for questions or comments.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments with regard to the importance of social housing.

I, for one, do look at it in terms of what the national government has done over the last few years in that whole field of national housing programs and so forth. I have found it to be wanting.

There seems to be a need to have a national housing policy. The government needs to come forward and start telling Canadians what kind of housing plans it has going into the future.

Could the hon. member elaborate on what she believes would be important to national housing? In terms of the federal government's role versus just giving money to the provinces, what role does the member believe Ottawa plays in developing the programs?

Ms. Ève Péclet: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

[Translation]

I will answer in French. It is important for the federal government to develop rules for urban development. We do not want social housing to become a ghetto. The government should establish social housing policies, and there should be a balance between condos and social housing. The government should invest in a plan with stricter rules for urban development and, for example, the decontamination of certain sites where social housing could be built.

In my riding, refineries have closed down. The government should decontaminate these sites and then build social housing.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, my first speech in the House, to first greet all my constituents in Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and to thank them for the trust they placed in me in the recent election.

The splendour of the river, the beauty of the cities and towns, the majestic space of the high plateaus, a rich history, and a long tradition of citizen engagement, technical innovation by our businesses and artistic creation—recognized nationally and sometimes internationally—make my part of the country, I am convinced, one of the best places to live in the entire country and one of the best places to raise a family in North America. I will work to ensure that this is the case for another 20, 50, 100 years. That is a promise.

I must also thank every voter who supported me in the recent election because, in my riding, it was an extremely tight race. As in any situation, even the most difficult, there was an upside: the clear and undeniable demonstration that, in a democracy, every vote counts. I was deeply moved by the young voters who, in most cases, were voting for the first time and who told me that they would vote every time they had the opportunity for the rest of their lives. These accounts strengthened my faith in the future of our democracy.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife. These long weeks of campaigning and the recount would have been extremely difficult without her. Thank you, Marie-Claude.

We are pleased to see that the \$2.2 billion for harmonizing the sales tax was included in the latest budget. However, it is very disappointing that popular pressure in an election was required to make this government give Quebec what it was rightfully owed for years.

In more than 3,000 meetings and hundreds of exchanges via electronic media, my constituents shared with me their fear of a Conservative government that would, on the one hand, cut services—their services—and, on the other hand, continue to allow billions of dollars to flow from government coffers to tax havens and tax cuts for big business.

The budget just presented by this government confirms my constituents' worst fears. There is nothing, not even the hint of a plan, to stop the flow of money to tax havens. There are new tax cuts again that will mostly benefit big business. For example, the government gave \$1.1 billion to big banks in the last four quarters alone, and this will continue. Our constituents will face billions of dollars in cuts and big business will receive billions of dollars in gifts.

The multinationals have no plans to open a big banking service centre that could create hundreds of jobs in Rivière-du-Loup, Montmagny or La Pocatière. Those billions of dollars are not going to result in significant investment in the regions. So the Conservatives' slogan about “our region in power” lacks credibility and it will certainly become devoid of all meaning in the coming years.

We need to start now to address the numerous challenges that climate change and new technologies are inevitably going to force on our society. In this kind of context, a government should be morally obligated to provide a long-term vision for the future.

The Budget

In the absence of lasting solutions, and given the half measures this budget proposes, it is impossible to provide reassuring answers to youth or to parents of young children about these major challenges and thus the possibility of a prosperous future.

Let us look at some examples from my riding of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. A solid job-creation program that would truly allow entrepreneurs to take a chance at expanding—turning small businesses into medium-sized ones and creating employment—is something that must be done for the regions and for our entrepreneurs. This budget offers very little, only a fraction of what it would take to make a difference.

Back home, in the high plateaus, in the mountains, people are in desperate need of basic education. The only literacy support I found in the budget was a mention of a literacy program for seniors in Yellowknife. That is all. Do not get me wrong; I wish the people of Yellowknife a prosperous future. I wish them nothing but the best, but I have to wonder how a program like that will help the people of Tourville.

• (1650)

The \$60 million in assistance over one year for the forestry industry—which I would consider a symbolic amount—completely disregards the huge potential for sustainable development in this industry, which is still struggling to get back on track after the crisis. A plan to set up broadband Internet in all towns, even those in the mountains, is a priority for the immediate future in these regions—not in 4, 8 or 20 years, but now. All this budget calls for is consultations. It is time to take action.

In Rivière-du-Loup, hundreds of workers are watching their pension plan disappear, since it is not protected by the federal government if their employer goes bankrupt or is operating at a loss. Here is what the government has to offer these honest workers, who have contributed to their pension plan for decades. It is very convoluted. I quote:

...accommodations under the pension tax rules for members and retirees [whose rights are not defined, though they have some] of underfunded pension plans that are being wound up due to an employer's insolvency...

That is an indirect way of saying they will not be protecting Canadians' pensions at any time in the next four years. A tax accommodation to compensate for losing 30 years of contributions to a retirement fund is pretty weak and unacceptable. These are just a few examples of the Conservatives' lack of vision. The foundations of modern society seem to have been forgotten by the members opposite. There are two in particular I wish to underscore.

A tax credit is not a magic bullet. It does not apply to low-income people who pay little to no tax. They also have talented children who deserve to take piano lessons. Tax credits are not going to help develop those talents. Instead, hundreds of millions of dollars need to be spent on basic skills and on marketing renewable energies—not on more studies or trials—or invested in reliable rapid transit that would allow people to travel between Quebec City and Ottawa by train without it taking seven hours.

These things are not short-term losses for the treasury. They are long-term investments to make Canada a society that will still be modern in 10, 20 or 30 years. Because the members opposite are

wearing blinders when it comes to these future challenges and because of the regressive way of seeing the world that is apparent throughout this budget, it is impossible for me to support it and contribute to delaying for yet another year the ideas supported by 60% of my fellow Canadians. We must make these ideas a reality to ensure a prosperous future for our children and the children of all Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if that is the quality of MPs we now have in the House of Commons, then the House of Commons has a very bright future.

My colleague is probably aware that a food bank report that came out last year showed that 904,000 Canadians in 2010 used a food bank. If the trend continues, within three years, one million Canadians will be using a food bank. In the city of Calgary there is a food bank designed specifically for veterans. In 2005, 58 veterans used that food bank. In 2010, 204 veterans used it.

The Prime Minister said at the Conservative convention that Canada is now becoming a conservative country. Almost one million people will be using a food bank in a few years. Is that what he means by a conservative Canada? The heroes of our country, our veterans, who fought and died for this country, have to use charity in order to get their sustenance. Is that the kind of Canada the Conservatives are bringing to us?

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Once again, I am going to relate this issue to local endeavours in my riding. I must commend an organization with which I am very familiar, Moisson Kamouraska, for its efforts. Unfortunately, this organization has had to make do with a budget that has remained unchanged for years, despite the fact that more and more people are lining up to ask for food. Food and shelter are basic needs. I am not talking about extras. This situation is clearly unacceptable. It is the result of a lack of intelligent, comprehensive, worthwhile reforms, such as the indexing of pensions to a level that would ensure that seniors are able to buy a sandwich every day rather than just a coffee and an apple, which does not cut it. This lack of vision in many programs is causing more and more people to turn to food banks, which are receiving less funding. Unfortunately, the future is not bright for these people.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do want to question the member on an issue he raised a while ago in talking about seniors and how it relates to poverty, as my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore pointed out, about the food banks.

The Budget

The budget contains a \$300 million increase for the guaranteed income supplement which becomes beneficial for so many, certainly for those in rural areas where I come from, when it comes to basic food and heating costs that are rising. These are major impediments to getting out of poverty. However, the studies say that we would probably need around \$700 million or more to have a substantial impact on the seniors who are most vulnerable.

Perhaps my colleague could comment on that, particularly for the area that he represents.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the connection between poverty and seniors. Unfortunately, a large percentage of people age 55 and over in the regions are losing their jobs. They are facing significant technological changes and they need help acquiring certain skills so that they can remain in the job market. These people, who are having difficulty reintegrating into the job market, along with those whose pensions will not be indexed to a reasonable level, will find themselves in precarious situations and, yes, there will be even longer lines at the food banks. According to all the information I currently have about my riding, food banks' budgets will not be increased this year.

Allow me to digress for a moment. My predecessor, who was a colleague of the members opposite, was supposed to attend a meeting to confirm \$40,000 in funding for Moisson Kamouraska. He forgot to attend the meeting, which was scheduled to take place six months ago. Moisson Kamouraska is still waiting for the \$40,000. I hope that this is not representative of the consideration the members opposite give to the needs of food banks.

[English]

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House today to speak to budget 2011. I will be sharing my time with the member for Samia—Lambton.

I am very pleased with the excellent budget put forward by our finance minister. I want to note some of the accomplishments in the budget and how it will help Canadians significantly.

Prior to the budget that was presented, initially in March and more recently again, many members of Parliament embarked upon prebudget consultations in their own ridings. I had the pleasure of doing that in Barrie. In looking back on the comments we received in our community, it is interesting to see how this budget really reflects the aspirations and concerns of Canadians.

At four different prebudget town hall meetings that I held, we managed to have consultations and submissions from a wide variety of people in the community of Barrie. We had submissions from city councillors, school board trustees, members of the Chamber of Commerce, doctors, nurses, emergency services personnel, seniors, students, business owners and the mayor of Barrie. We also had an active electronic survey and we received significant feedback through that.

Each of the participants provided insightful contributions from different aspects of our city. Many shared the same concerns as all Canadians: ensuring good jobs are available, keeping low taxes and investing in long-term growth. I heard about the need to better

support small business and local industry. I heard about retirement savings, the rising cost of energy and the challenges facing our most vulnerable seniors. I heard pleas for more doctors in underserved areas, concerns over the health of our citizens and the future of our growing city. I believe budget 2011 did an excellent job in meeting those concerns.

Initially I wanted to talk a little about infrastructure, for which this budget has a fair amount. The city of Barrie has had tremendous infrastructure needs. We have had a 6% growth rate over 10 years. The submissions made by members of the city of Barrie task force on my budget consultations were that stable infrastructure funding was important and that the gas tax revenues had been very helpful, but that it was the sense of stability, the sense of planning that was needed for municipalities.

John Brassard, a city councillor in Barrie, said how impressed he was with the funding toward municipalities and that the grant should continue. Councillor Brassard said that infrastructure was intimately linked to economic development and enables a city to compete for jobs.

Making the gas tax funding transfers to municipalities permanent is a welcome sign in budget 2011. I applaud the Minister of Finance for taking this critical initiative. Putting this into law, the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns will allow for long-term municipal infrastructure planning and budgeting.

When I was a city councillor in Barrie for five years prior to 2005, I remember how difficult it was for municipalities and how strained they were for resources. It is pretty significant that we now see municipalities with a stable partner with the federal government helping them with their infrastructure needs.

Prior to our government first being elected in 2006, Barrie was receiving just under \$2 million a year. These transfers have steadily increased under our government and currently the transfer for Barrie is approaching \$7 million annually. That is typical for cities across Canada. They have seen a steady and consistent increase.

The passing of budget 2011 means that Barrie can count on these funds year after year to assist in meeting our local commitments and will continue to help ease the burden on property taxpayers.

The Budget

In terms of tax reductions, this budget also helps businesses and Canadians in many respects. I am pleased that our government did not follow the call from other parties in the House to roll back the series of graduated business tax reductions passed by a majority of parliamentarians in 2007. Some parties even wanted to roll back and increase the burden on business by saddling them with taxes surpassing the pre-2007 levels. These reductions were designed to keep Canada competitive with our trading partners and our government understood the strategy was working for Canadian business.

• (1705)

Sybil Goruk, the executive director of the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, put it best when she wrote to me to voice her concerns about this alarming call for increases to corporate taxes. After she read the Bank of Canada January report, which noted that 44% of Canadian firms expected to invest more in productivity-enhancing machinery and equipment in the years ahead, Sybil wrote:

Consistency and reliability in government policy are critical factors in business decision-making. Businesses across the country have invested with the understanding that taxes would decline. A sudden change of course would constitute a broken promise to thousands of businesses and the many people they have employed based on that promise.

Our government kept its promise and I am very glad the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce recognize the importance of keeping business taxes low.

In terms of creating jobs, this budget is a victory for Canadians in that sense. Creating jobs in a community is as important as anything else. Small business plays a significant economic role in cities such as Barrie. It is the lifeblood of our economy. Business owners told me that investment in their operations would promote growth and create more jobs in the community.

All too often my community of Barrie has seen small businesses come and go, particularly in the downtown core. Rod Jackson, a former city councillor and a human resources manager, stressed that it was important the government have incentive programs for small businesses that could be implemented at all levels of government. These programs should not only help start up business, but should also help existing companies stay open.

Budget 2011 addresses many of those requests. Two examples are: extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers make new investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment; and enhancing programs to help businesses keep workers, like work sharing programs, the wage earner protection program and the targeted initiative for older workers.

However, the aspect of budget 2011 that will be really helpful is the hiring credit for small businesses. It is a terrific yet cost effective way of encouraging small businesses to hire workers instead of putting it off to another year.

In terms of helping young people, budget 2011 is a victory for young Canadians. Another aspect of job creation comes from young students who are making the transition from school to the workforce. In Barrie we are lucky enough to have Georgian College, along with many university partnerships with Georgian, supplying the city with well-educated graduates. Joe Rockbrune, who is a small business

owner and was on our prebudget consultations, made the point that it was critical to find that transition and that it was important for young people to have help finding the jobs that await them.

There are several things this budget does to stimulate the economy and invest in job growth. I am also happy to see the government investing \$20 million in the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. By supporting the youth entrepreneurs of today, we are helping our young people succeed and become leaders of tomorrow.

One of my favourite aspects of budget 2011 is the \$100 million set aside for brain disorders. I had the pleasure over the last year and a half of sitting on the neurological disorder subcommittee in Parliament that studied the black hole we have with brain and neurological disorders. The one thing we heard again and again was that government needed to focus on this. I will be honest when I say that there was very little hope that something would happen this soon. To see our Minister of Finance focus on that area, which rarely gets attention, is a tremendous thing.

I think of people in my riding, like Derek Walton, who, despite having ALS for eight years and being restricted to a wheelchair, skydives to raise funds for research. I think of Jeanette Elliott, who is a volunteer working non-stop for the MS Society, or Greg McGinnis, who is doing the same thing for the Parkinson Society. All of these efforts are to raise funds for research. To see the federal government invest in such a meaningful way is something very special about budget 2011 in terms of its focus on neurosciences.

I just want to add one other point that was helpful in budget 2011, and that is the comments I heard from seniors about needing more help. There are lots of low-income seniors across Canada and Barrie is no exception. I know the increase to the GIS will be welcomed. It is a very helpful part of budget 2011.

I commend my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on delivering a budget that is responsible and proactive on behalf of all Canadians. The low tax plan for jobs and growth meets many of the requests I heard from my constituents. On behalf of the people of Barrie, I thank him and his team for their hard work.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hear my hon. colleague talking about a budget that really reflects the concerns of Canadians, and I have to wonder.

Hearing my colleague's comments, I could not help but think of a single mother I met during the election campaign who is living in poverty and who was recently diagnosed with cancer. Long before her diagnosis, this woman had to fight to have access to health care, proper treatment and affordable drugs. She still has to fight today, although one would think the opposite given her situation. One would think she should be getting the help she needs and that she deserves.

How can the member call this budget a complete success when it does not offer sufficient measures to work with the provinces to improve public health care?

[English]

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have a question on health care because I believe that this budget was a tremendous investment in, and a tremendous victory for, health care.

We saw an increase of 6% to health care transfers. Let us look at the contrast with how it used to be. The last time there was a significant recession in the 1990s, the government of the day cut health care. To see a government invest in health care despite the fragile economic recovery and to invest in such a meaningful way shows that it is a government that cares profoundly about health care.

I would add to that. It is interesting to hear this question from the NDP members, because when they were in power provincially in Ontario during the recession their response was to actually cut medical enrolment. So the doctor shortages we face in Canada, especially in Ontario, are because of that ill thought-out decision. We cannot attack health care in the middle of a recession.

Our finance minister did the opposite. He invested in health care. I think that is a wonderful thing.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the member for his work on the subcommittee on neurological disorders. He certainly deserves praise for that from all members of the House.

The other issue, if I may go to the health care issue just to point out something, he talked about a commitment the government is making and investments in health care. I think we had better wait until 2014 before we decide to make a decision on that. The mechanisms we are using now to invest come from 2004. Stay tuned is probably the best advice I can give on that one.

The other issue I want to talk about is municipalities. The member talked about infrastructure. One of the biggest issues coming out of rural parts of the country is just how difficult it can be to come up with that one-third commitment.

Would the hon. member consider the formula to be very difficult for some of the smaller communities? Would he suggest that the Treasury Board should consider changing some of these formulas so that it is easier for the smallest of communities to receive funding on infrastructure?

For example, there is a new waste water regulation that is going to be particularly onerous to smaller communities because they will have to come within regulation of the environment. It is going to be a devastating situation because a lot of these smaller communities just cannot afford it.

Would the hon. member consider that as a way for the Treasury Board to reconsider some of its formulas?

• (1715)

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I remember prior to the economic stimulus program that there were questions and comments saying that there would not be enough applications because municipalities could not afford the one-third.

In retrospect, one interesting thing is the fact that the challenge was not having enough applications from municipalities hoping to have an economic stimulus grant, it is that there were actually too many applications. Municipalities and towns of all sizes were excited to have a partner in the federal government. There were literally hundreds and hundreds, and thousands and thousands of applications that flowed in with regard to infrastructure.

With respect to which formula works best, whether it is one-third or different percentages, obviously all levels of government have to share the burden of infrastructure costs. I think every level of government is pressed.

I believe the federal government has been very generous in infrastructure. If we look at the period of the last few years, this is a period of record levels of infrastructure investment. The federal government is certainly doing its part.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing his time with me this afternoon.

It is a great honour to return to Ottawa as the federal representative for Sarnia—Lambton. I wish to thank my constituents for expressing their faith in me to carry forward their perspectives on issues of importance across our riding. I pledge to do this with honour and integrity.

I would like to take a moment to thank several people who worked tirelessly during the election. First, my family, Bill, Will, Tina and Josh; my campaign manager, Mike Hankey, who has led me through three successful federal campaigns; my EDA members who performed various roles during the campaign: the official agent, the computer team, the sign team, all the volunteers who worked hard to make my success possible and a big thanks to my dedicated volunteers who worked so many hours on the "get out to vote" aspect of the campaign.

Also, I would like to thank the citizens of Canada, who have decided that seven years of unstable minority parliaments were not helping our country position itself on the right track to prosperity and success. I thank these Canadians for electing a stable Conservative majority government; the first majority government to lead our nation since the year 2000.

I would like to express my congratulations to all parliamentarians who have sought and gained election to Canada's House of Commons in the recent 41st election. We should never forget that our communities sent us here to represent their wishes. We have a special responsibility to the regions we represent. I look forward to serving the 41st Parliament with all the members in the House.

The Budget

I am speaking today in support of the 2011 budget document which is the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I have full confidence in the fiscal agenda laid out for Canada in the budget. It is regretful that we have had to go through an election first in order to table this important business for our nation and in order to pass the urgent measures contained within the 2011 budget document.

However, we are now fully able to reflect the wishes of Canadians to provide a stable and prosperous economic blueprint for our nation.

With certainty, the most pressing issue for Canadians is with the continued prosperity of our nation. Strong fiscal leadership has been the prerequisite for international leaders since the great recession of 2008 and none has shown greater leadership than our own Prime Minister and finance minister.

We know that there are still very serious issues that Canada continues to confront, including a sovereign debt crisis across the eurozone and threats of increased conflict abroad. Even Mother Nature seems intent on doing all she can to make the recovery efforts of nations across the globe as difficult as possible.

With these issues in mind, Canada requires strong leadership on matters of fiscal policy. I would argue we have just that with the current team in place to lead Canada forward.

Speaking to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, I am pleased to see several specific measures that will enhance Canadian prosperity during these difficult times. I am very pleased to also see several broad measures that I consider to be of the utmost importance moving forward for our national economy. This low-tax plan for jobs and economic growth will preserve Canada's advantage in the international economy. It contains measures to strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors, families and students, and will grant our nation the stability needed to move strongly into the future.

In Sarnia—Lambton, businesses have been hard hit by the global economic downturn. Despite the difficulties that firms faced, I know that measures brought forward by this government in our previous budgetary responses to the economic downturn helped businesses survive as best they could in the past three years. This is why I support the initiatives taken by the government in the next phase of the economic action plan to support job creation. These measures include the provision of a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring in this sector. Small business needs this kind of support. It is a major incubator in not just Ontario but every province and territory. Canadian entrepreneurs need this support put in place and this budget will help them.

The extension of the work-sharing program, in addition to supporting the manufacturing sector through the extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance, will have a significant impact on allowing businesses to expand during these difficult times and is supported by businesses in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton.

The same can be said for investments in the next phase of the economic action plan that will support innovation in Canada's farming, forestry, and mining communities.

• (1720)

As a member of Parliament with a strong municipal background from my years as both mayor and county warden of my community, I fully understand the importance of having long-term stable funding for infrastructure projects like road rehabilitation. This is why I strongly support the measure contained in the 2011 budget to legislate a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion to the gas tax fund to provide stable funding for Canadian municipalities. I know with certainty that this is welcomed by municipalities across Canada and I ask my colleagues in the House to support this urgently needed measure.

Beyond the measures that target job creation in the next phase of the economic action plan, it is important to note the strong support we are prepared to give to families and communities. For example, we have provided financial support to increase the guaranteed income supplement for seniors who rely on the OAS payments to get by. We know there are Canadian seniors facing financial hardships and we want to help them out.

As a long-serving member of the Standing Committee on Health, I have a strong grasp on the issue of health human resources. I know it is difficult to get new doctors and nurses to go into rural communities to serve. In order to attract more doctors and nurses to these under-served regions, the Government of Canada has come up with a very practical solution. It will forgive up to \$40,000 of the federal component of Canada's student loans for doctors and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses. This is a very good first step toward addressing the shortage of health human resources in our rural areas.

Of course, there is more that can be done for families and communities. With this in mind, the Government of Canada is providing three new creative tax credits to assist families, including the new \$2,000 family caregiver tax credit, the new children's art tax credit and a new \$3,000 volunteer firefighter tax credit for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities. In addition, the Government of Canada has committed \$870 million over two years to address climate and air quality issues, including the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program. Many people in my community called for the reintroduction of the eco-energy program.

Furthermore, I wish to speak in favour of this government's commitment to deficit reduction. The fiscal track record of this government is very strong, with billions being paid off our national debt up until the moment the global economic downturn struck our economy. During that recessionary period, the G20 world leaders determined that strong fiscal stimulus was required by member nations to ensure the global economy could bounce back. Canada tabled its own plan for stimulus, the original economic action plan that the 2011-12 budget is a continuation of.

The Budget

During the first two years of our national response to the global economic challenges facing Canada, we did indeed utilize deficit financing in order to finance urgent infrastructure projects, to assist struggling industrial sectors and overall to help stabilize our economy in the face of the largest economic downturn since the end of World War II. I would be remiss if I were not to mention that although this government developed a very reasonable stimulus response, other parties in the House were calling for hundreds of billions of dollars in spending, a level that would have been irresponsible and negligent.

Canadians have spoken during the recent election and they support the Conservative Party of Canada's plan to get our economy back on track and to end the deficit spending currently taking place. Once we get back to a balanced budget, Canada will again be in a prime position to begin paying down our national debt or to take measures that may be necessary should a double-dip recession take hold due to outside pressures associated with the global economy.

The one last measure I would like to voice my support for is the call for the creation of the common securities regulator to act across Canada. With a single securities regulator, we will not only cut back on red tape at the provincial level, but we will move toward a more balanced and internationally recognizable system of monitoring our various financial sectors in Canada. I support the finance minister's actions on this file and I call on Parliament to stand behind the government and support us on this matter.

I appreciate the time today to share these important items with hon. members. I feel it is nothing less than urgent for all parties to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. Canadians have strongly registered their support for the new government and since we ran a platform based on this very document and won the most recent election to form a majority government, I feel it is incumbent on all MPs in the House of Commons to stand beside the Canadians they represent and support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of talk about job creation from the government lately. But I must point out in this House that the government has announced huge job cuts within the Government of Canada. This seems to be a bit of a “not in my backyard” policy.

The government also seems to be allergic to a certain type of economic development. Take, for example, the co-operative model in Quebec. Desjardins has been a huge economic success and is a great economic model. This model has not lost its place in terms of economic development. Economic development can take different forms.

Canada seems to have become much richer as a country, but in reality, it is 20% of our richest citizens who have increased their revenues and, therefore, their wealth. I have a quote from the National Council of Welfare:

Canada has posted the strongest employment growth in the G7, but it is also one of the G7 countries in which there are the greatest income disparities among families. Poverty in a rich country is not inevitable; it is the result of bad policies.

Does the government plan on introducing a real program to eliminate poverty?

[English]

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this House and certainly look forward to working with her over the next four years.

We know that this new budget covers a wide aspect of issues. We also know, as the member across has stated, that Canada has done well in coming out of this recession, much better than other countries. We have done it because of the policies that have been put in place by this government and we will continue to do that.

The latest budget that the minister has put forward certainly covers many things that will bring great benefit to many people across a wide spectrum in this country. It involves job creation. It supports families, communities and municipalities. There is not just one thing in this budget. This is a budget that affects everyone in this country. It is a budget that has been widely supported and I would encourage the member opposite to support it as well.

• (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member caught my ear when she made reference to this budget in that it is innovative for our farmers. The first thing that came across my mind was what the government is actually doing to the wheat farmers in the prairies of Manitoba.

The vast majority of the wheat farmers do not support the actions the government is taking regarding the Wheat Board. How is it that the government sees fit to give the impression that it is being supportive of the wheat farmer while at the same time the wheat farmer does not want to lose the Wheat Board?

Can the government not listen and at least allow for a plebiscite, so that we can hear and act firsthand on what the prairie wheat farmers actually want as opposed to the government of the day wiping the Wheat Board out without the support of the wheat farmer?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. I look forward to working with him as well over the next four years.

This government believes in equality and that is one of the big issues. We believe that the western farmer deserves the same freedoms and advantages that other farmers in this country have and enjoy. That is one thing we stand up for very strongly.

There are many other things in this budget that are going toward the agriculture industry. There is \$100 million over five years for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to improve food inspection. That is very important in this day and age, particularly when we hear of the food incidents that are happening. There are many things in here that are going to help the agriculture industry, the hog industry, and the commercialization of agricultural innovation.

We do believe in equality and we will try to help the agriculture industry right across the country.

The Budget

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, and the other Speakers who have been appointed to be the pilots in the House of Commons to ensure that everyone gets fair and equitable time on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

As this is my first speech in the 41st Parliament, I would like to take the opportunity to thank a few people who worked so hard for me in the last election. First of all, I want to thank my family, especially my husband and my children, who supported me in a major way to get re-elected.

I want to thank John Feldsted, who was my campaign manager, and Kaz Malkiewicz, who was my official agent and worked so hard to ensure that the campaign was run very well.

I want to especially thank the Kildonan—St. Paul Electoral District Association. These people are dedicated and they worked very hard.

My thanks also go to the number of volunteers who came in every day to go door-to-door and who worked hard to ensure I was elected. I am pleased to say that it was a resounding victory.

Last but not least, I want to say a special thanks to the constituents of Kildonan—St. Paul, who have asked me to return to Ottawa to represent their concerns and their values.

Kildonan—St. Paul is an amazing riding. It has diverse ethnic groups. I am just so pleased to stand here in the House of Commons to speak to this budget today representing those constituents.

As the member of Parliament for Kildonan—St. Paul, there is no more important responsibility placed on me than accounting for the finances of our federal government. I have to give a special congratulations to our Prime Minister. History will tell that we have the best prime minister that this country has ever had.

I also want to congratulate our finance minister, who has done yeoman's work. He listened to Canadians and associations, and groups all across this country to produce a balanced approach in the budget, an approach that will stabilize Canada's economy, an approach that will keep people working and families in their homes. The budget addresses many of the issues that families are concerned with on a daily basis.

I have to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister for ensuring that commerce and trade, business, and public safety are well balanced. Our country is well ahead of many other countries. We have very strong leadership. The last election proved that to be true. Canadians have a stable Conservative majority government that will continue to serve the public in the next four years. This was a real vote of confidence from the people of Canada and a special thanks to the people of Canada for giving us this opportunity.

Today we live in an age of global fiscal uncertainty. However, our Conservative government has taken significant measures to ensure Canadians can prosper, provide for their families, and strengthen our economy.

On June 6, 2011, the Minister of Finance presented the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth. The budget focuses on four key priorities: first, supporting job creation; second, supporting families and communities; third, investing in innovation, education and training; and fourth, preserving Canada's fiscal advantage. This is very important to the economy and growth of our country.

During the last election, many of my constituents took the time to share with me their concerns and priorities. Among the issues raised, there was a clear and consistent theme: my constituents wanted our government to provide for Canada's seniors, who have invested their lives to build our great nation.

•(1735)

They wanted support and tax relief provided for their families. They wanted our streets to be kept safe from violent criminals. In particular, they wanted to support small businesses because, like infrastructure, they are the engines that support our economy all across this nation. As well, what continually came forward was providing support for our brave volunteer firefighters.

Having listened carefully to the presentation of the budget last week, clearly I am delighted that our Minister of Finance has carefully and thoughtfully constructed a budget that addresses the needs of my constituents in Kildonan—St. Paul and indeed addresses the needs of Canadians all across our nation.

Since 2006, our government has provided significant assistance to seniors. It has provided over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief for seniors and pensioners, and removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls. However, there is more to be done in my riding and across our nation.

By enhancing the GIS, eligible low income seniors will receive an additional annual top up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. During the last election, as I was having coffee parties and speaking to seniors groups, they were absolutely delighted with that. It was a long time coming. They were very happy that this would happen under a stable Conservative government. This represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year. This measure will further improve the fiscal security and well-being of more than 680,000 seniors across our nation.

An additional \$10 million was put into the budget for the very important new horizons for seniors program to promote volunteerism, mentorship, the social participation of seniors, and to expand awareness of elder abuse. This enhanced support will further the program's objectives by funding a greater number of projects. In my riding, this new horizons for seniors program has done much good. Seniors get together, they socialize, they learn, and they grow. It has been a catalyst for promoting many wonderful things for our seniors.

Also, an additional \$50 million will be used to extend the targeted initiative for older workers.

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Support and tax relief for families has been well-established through this budget. That is why the 15% non-refundable new children's arts tax credit of up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and development activities is something that is very beneficial to families.

Many families are in what we call the sandwich generation whereby they are taking care of elders. The 15% non-refundable new family caregiver tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types is very important, especially for relatives that they are taking care of.

There are many other things such as the enhanced medical expense tax credit; the eco-energy retrofit program, that the member from Sarnia has just talked about; and the benefits to help students. These have enhanced families to such an extent that they can balance their budgets, look forward to educating their children, and look forward to having a balanced, stable budget from the government.

We have cut taxes over 120 times since forming government. We have cut the personal income tax rate to its lowest level of 15%. We have removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of an average family. We have done many more things. We have introduced the universal child care benefit, offering families more choice in child care.

We have done many other things to build families, enhance their ability to grow their families, and to prosper in this country.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in its budget, the government talks about helping businesses and entrepreneurs, but who will truly benefit from this help? Some people are worried, and that is understandable. We need only look at the billions of dollars that have been given to the most profitable companies.

In my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard, there are many small family businesses. They are very common in my riding. I would like to know what this government plans to do for these businesses in my riding.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member to the House of Commons. It is so great to see younger and very enthusiastic MPs, as we all are.

Job creation is one of the most important things that our government has supported. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is investing \$1 million over two years to ensure that more employers and unions benefit from Labour Canada's preventive mediation program.

Ultimately all Canadians, including those in my province of Manitoba, will benefit from fewer work stoppages and greater economic stability. That speaks to some of the concerns the member has expressed this afternoon. This has been a big issue in our country.

Our finance minister and the Prime Minister have addressed that, and it is just one of the many issues they have addressed.

• (1745)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member is a very specific one.

On several occasions the member mentioned the word “non-refundable”. She talks about tax credits for artistic programs for young people. She talks about a home caregiver tax credit, again non-refundable. She talks about a tax credit for volunteer firemen, again non-refundable.

Does she appreciate the fact that people on low income will not be able to take advantage of these because they do not have taxable income? What does the member have to say about that disparity?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House of Commons. It is always great to see new faces and faces that have been here before and will once again have dialogue.

The fact is Canadians have said, in a very strong, resounding way, that they like what is happening in our country. There has been support for low income housing. There has been support for people out of work. There has been support for our most vulnerable populations.

This balance is so important in our country. I know I do not have time to go over every one specifically, but I am sure if the member took a little time to look them up and to support our next budget, I think he would be very pleased that his riding would also be served well with this budget.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. The residents of Kildonan—St. Paul made a wise decision because she is a very hard-working MP.

I had the opportunity just after the election to go to a meeting with some of the seniors in my riding. Several hundred people were there. They were asking if we were going to be tabling the exact budget again. I indicated that it would be pretty much the same budget tabled again.

One of the programs that the seniors benefit a lot from is the new horizons for seniors program, not only the capital assistance but also the programs to get seniors engaged in the communities.

Could the member expand a little on what that has meant to the seniors, to get them engaged in the communities?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague him back as well.

Very specifically, seniors are very appreciative of the new horizons program because they learn how to use computers and do all sorts of things, like their own tax returns. Seniors can apply for this very important initiative and work together in groups to grow their organization. It is very important.

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Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I am very honoured that my constituents of Kitchener Centre have chosen me for the second time to be their voice in Ottawa. I thank them and I assure them that I will devote every ounce of my strength and every skill that I possess to represent Kitchener faithfully in the House. I also very much appreciate the support of my wife and family, my great campaign team and all the friends and neighbours who put my signs on their lawns.

I rise today in support of the budget tabled by the hon. finance minister. In all of human endeavour, there is no more complex undertaking than the preparation of a budget for the proper governance of a modern nation. It is the place where lofty ambitions collide with cold realities, the place where some compelling priorities win out over other equally compelling priorities, the place where a serious misstep can ruin, or at least injure, the legitimate financial interests of millions of citizens. Crafting a budget is a complex and challenging task.

In a parliamentary democracy it is even more difficult. We were elected as government, based upon commitments made to the Canadian people. The damage to confidence in democratic institutions is incalculable when governments renege on their commitments for anything short of catastrophic circumstances. We must be true to our word.

Yet other parties were elected because those who supported them had other priorities. Can we give due consideration to the priorities of the opposition? Can we just compromise for the sake of compromise, renege on our commitments to Canadians? To ask that question is to answer it.

What are the unshakable commitments our government made to Canadians?

First and foremost, we promised to protect the jobs on which Canadians across this country depend. As I went door to door, my constituents made plain to me, that was their chief preoccupation. Some were just getting back to work after the recession. Some were still searching for work. Young Canadians, older Canadians, all were cautious in their optimism about the economy. Canadians have a right to be cautious.

Canada led the world in job creation, and we did that with one of the lowest debt to GDP ratios. However, elsewhere around the world, circumstances are much less favoured: nuclear disaster in Japan; debt crisis across the European Union; uprisings in the Middle East; and unbelievable debt and deficits in the United States. Canada is an island of stability in an ocean of uncertainty.

As a trading nation, we are not immune from global currents. Canadians have a right to temper their optimism with caution and governments have a duty to address those concerns.

Our budget offers a small business hiring credit to encourage job creation. We are also extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for machinery for two additional years to assist manufacturers in Kitchener Centre and across this country. We are reviewing the best 14 weeks and working while on EI pilot projects for one year to give relief to Canadian families. The budget also includes \$20 million for the Canadian Youth Business Foundation support of young entrepreneurs.

Further, this budget's job creation measures support a cleaner energy economy. This includes renewed investments totalling almost \$100 million over two years in clean energy and energy efficiency research. I am especially pleased that this budget also delivers \$400 million more for the eco-energy for home retrofit program. I pressed hard for this program, which combines job creating retrofits with greenhouse gas reducing energy efficiencies.

However, our long-term economic health depends on more than just immediate job creation. It also depends on expanding our corporate revenues by lowering our corporate tax rate.

● (1750)

A simplistic view might consider that the idea of reducing the tax rate contradicts the idea of expanding the corporate tax base. In the real world, it is no contradiction. Studies have shown that lower taxes will induce corporations to book their profits in Canada, creating more revenue than we lose through lower rates.

Our long-term economic health also depends on jobs for the long term. Our investment in the multi-nation allied procurement of F-35 jets will do exactly that. Not only will companies like Héroux-Devtek in my riding get to bid on jobs building Canadian jets, but also on jobs building jets for Norway, France, Great Britain and half a dozen other allies.

This budget also plans for the future by investing in a myriad of other innovation, education and training opportunities.

Finally, our long-term economic health depends upon eliminating the deficit.

Has it ever occurred to those members who embrace socialist policies that deficit financing, borrowing to finance government programs, results in a kind of reverse Robin Hood, a Robin Hood who takes from middle-income Canadians, in taxes, to pay to those wealthy enough to lend to the government, in interest? This is not the economic justice that a government owes its citizens and it limits our future capacity to provide health and education and other necessary services.

Our budget sets out a low tax plan to return to balanced budgets. We will deliver on the 2010 round of strategic reviews. We will take action to close tax loopholes. We will launch a comprehensive strategic and operating review to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

The budget also includes other priorities. We will lift the poorest seniors out of poverty with enhanced GIS. We will introduce new tax relief for family caregivers of infirm dependents. We will end the anti-democratic per vote state subsidy of some, but not all political parties. We will encourage children to participate in the arts. We will leverage more research into brain diseases like Alzheimer's and MS.

In short, we will match lofty ambitions against cold realities. We will pursue some compelling priorities over other priorities. We will protect the legitimate financial interests of millions of Canadians against serious government missteps.

Does that mean that dialogue and collaboration have no place in the future of 41st Parliament? Once we live up to our commitments, I hope there will be room for compromise. Providing we all respect the fundamental needs of ordinary Canadians, we can all work together in this Parliament.

Our government has proved it is willing to listen. When the current opposition leader proposed NDP priorities for the budget crafted in March, we listened. Eco-energy, GIS enhancement, incentives for rural medical recruitment, we found we could agree with those proposals and we put them in the budget.

Will the opposition pay us mutual respect? Will it compromise its demands? Will it support this sensible budget? I urge the opposition to demonstrate its desire to collaborate by supporting this budget, accepting that our government was elected based on the commitments made in the budget.

In this spirit, I want to close by quoting from the words of a great Canadian. His words express the spirit of this budget. His words speak especially to the fresh idealism of our new members of Parliament. He said:

As for you who stand today on the threshold of life, with a long horizon open before you for a long career of usefulness to your native land...I shall remind you that already many problems rise before you: problems of race division...of creed differences...of economic conflict...of national duty and national aspiration.... Let your aim and purpose, in good report or ill, in victory or defeat, be so to live, so to strive, so to serve as to do your part to raise even higher the standard of life and living...

These are the words of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, our seventh prime minister. Let us heed him and join together to pass this budget, doing our part to raise even higher the standard of life and living of all Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his inspiring speech on the budget. There is no doubt that he was inspired by it, anyhow, I am sure.

However, my question for him is about low taxes. I look at this budget and at the projections for personal income tax over the period of the next six years and I see that personal income tax collection in Canada will go from \$100 billion to \$151 billion over that period of time. That will be about a 50% increase in the amount of personal income tax that will come out of the average Canadian's pocket.

There will be inflation and an increase in the workforce, but those will not add up to that much of an increase in taxation.

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I would like my colleague to explain to me how he can consider this a low tax budget for Canadians when we see such a marvellous increase in the tax take.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his kind and generous comments. I have noticed him to be a gentleman in this House throughout and I am happy to thank him and encourage him in that, as I would all members.

I think my hon. colleague across the way knows very well, as all Canadians do, that if there is one thing they can count on this government to do, it is to keep personal income taxes low. That is why members will not find any increase in tax rates if they examine the budget. They will not find any reduction in personal exemptions. In fact, they will just find that we are doing more of the same with tax credits, for example, for children in the arts and for family caregivers of infirm dependants.

I would remind my friend that since 2006 our government has cut taxes 120 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in over 50 years.

• (1800)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question. The comment starts with the Conservative convention this past weekend and the many measures asked of the government to simplify the tax code and simplify tax measures. Yet in every budget that comes by, we see tax credit after tax credit. I have a large shoebox filled with receipts that I have to keep, which makes things even more complicated. That is even besides the refundable versus non-refundable measures.

My question is on the strategic review. This is a code word for cuts. We all know that and we all know that cuts are coming. However, what is exactly is coming has to make its way through the system and by the time we see it, it will be a lot more dangerous than we first realized.

At the beginning of question period, the Prime Minister said there would be no cuts to essential services, yet one service that is very important to the east coast of this country, the search and rescue sub-centre in St. John's, is being cut.

Last night, it responded to an emergency call. What will happen with the next call?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way might be aware that in my community of the Waterloo region, we lead the world in high-tech innovation. So I want to assure him that all that that is going to happen with the change he referred to is that calls will go electronically from one place to another. All of the search and rescue equipment that exists regionally will remain and will be capable of being directed.

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Believe me, in the 21st century, as I am sure my friend knows, electronic communications make the problem he is referring to virtually negligible, particularly given the BlackBerry from the Waterloo region and the many other digital innovations out of my community of Kitchener where, by the way, Google Canada now has its head office.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House to deliver my first complete speech following the recent election.

Like other members with their ridings, I would like to take one moment to thank the voters of Lac-Saint-Louis for showing their confidence in me once again by re-electing me to represent them in the House of Commons for the fourth time since 2004. It is a privilege and responsibility that all members of the House understand deeply, having been through this common experience of being chosen by one's fellow citizens, friends, neighbours and constituents to represent them in the House.

To get back to the topic at hand, the 2011 budget redux, I would point out that June 6 was an important date in tax history in Canada, tax freedom day. Every year tax freedom day occurs at a later date because of bracket creep. As incomes go up, people move into higher brackets and are paying more and more tax.

This brings me to a related point, which is the fact that individual taxpayers are carrying more and more of the tax burden in this country and corporations are carrying less and less. I would like to draw the attention of the House to an article that appeared in *Le Devoir* back in March.

• (1805)

[Translation]

The article was by Hélène Buzzetti and the headline said: "Corporate tax cuts meant that more than 50% of federal government revenues in 2010 came from individuals."

[English]

The article goes on to say that individuals are paying 50% of government revenues. Some would say that is because corporations are paying a smaller percentage as a result of the recession, which has reduced corporate profits and therefore corporate taxes. Yet if one looks at the projections for 2012-13, when the government sees a return to better economic times, even then individual taxpayers will collectively be paying 49% of the tax revenues of this country. In some ways one could say that by allowing the federal corporate tax rate to continue to drop, the federal government is really giving us a budget that increases the tax burden.

What I find interesting in the government's argument is that it likes to have it both ways. It likes to tell us that when things do not go well, it is the fault of the international economy and fact that demand south of the border is not as strong as it should be and that we therefore suffer the consequences in terms of lower employment and corporate profits. Then, on the other hand, it wants to take credit for everything good that happens. It says that if we cut corporate taxes, we will have greater employment. However, there is a contradiction there.

The fact that employment is not growing as fast as it could is because of the recession south of the border and that we are an exporting nation. Cutting the corporate tax rate will not spur companies to invest. Anyone who has taken economics 101 knows that investment responds to heightened confidence and heightened confidence is a result of heightened demand.

Therefore, as long as markets in the United States remain soft, there will not be an incentive for the corporate sector in Canada to invest. In fact, we have seen evidence of that because corporations collectively have been sitting on about \$400 billion of cash. That means they have all the money they need to invest, but they are not investing because the economic climate in the United States is not encouraging them to invest. It is not a question of there not being enough money to invest; and even if a company did not have large cash reserves, it could borrow at historically low interest rates. The reason companies are not doing that as much as they should is the situation with demand in the United States.

Another point I would like to raise in regard to corporate tax cuts is something that has not really been discussed because it is a bit technical. When the corporate tax rate is reduced in Canada, so is the dividend tax credit that individual taxpayers apply on their taxes for the dividend income they receive. That is because of the relationship between the corporate tax rate and the dividend tax credit. Therefore, if corporate tax rates are reduced, the dividend tax credit is reduced. In fact, taxes will increase for Canadians.

The other issue that is quite important to keep in mind is that when a multinational corporation pays tax in Canada, it gets a credit on its U.S. corporate income tax. If it pays less corporate tax in Canada, that credit will not be as great. So the company's lower corporate income tax paid in Canada will be offset by higher corporate income tax paid to the U.S. Treasury. That dampens any positive effect that reducing corporate income taxes could have.

An interesting point from an article in the *The Economist* in May is that when taxes on a company's profits go down, most of them are paid out in the form of dividends to shareholders. For example, there was a study done by Kristin Forbes, a former member of George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, which found that for every extra dollar of foreign profits American firms brought home because of lower taxes abroad, or for whatever reason, American firms tended not to invest but to pay out from 60¢ to 92¢ more to shareholders.

• (1810)

To say that if we reduce corporate taxes all of a sudden there will be an investment boom is really not a proper conclusion to draw.

The other issue, for example, is that our corporate tax rates are much lower than those of our competitors, so there is no reason to drop them more at this time. It will not have any impact on corporate behaviour. One can look at Dell Computers, which moved out of a low corporate tax rate country to a higher corporate tax rate country. It went from Ireland to Poland where the corporate taxes were higher. That negates the argument that the government makes about attracting investment. Why did it go to Poland? It went to Poland because it was searching for a lower wage rate. What really attracts companies is not so much lower tax rates, but lower wage rates.

I think members would agree that the mission we have given ourselves as a country is not to become the lowest wage country in the hemisphere. That is not where we are headed. We are trying to produce the most innovative products and services that we can using our brain power. In other words, we want to encourage economic growth through innovation.

How do we do that? We invest in education. We make sure that all of the best minds in Canada who want to go to university can have a chance to go to university. That is what we were trying to do in our Liberal platform in the last election with our philosophy that if a student gets the grades, he or she gets to go. That is why we were offering students \$1,000 a year for every year of CEGEP and university that they complete. That would have been very valuable for students and for their families, the middle-class families that the party opposite claims to have a monopoly on representing. Those families are facing higher tuition fees. In Quebec, tuition fees will be going up \$400 to \$500 a year for the next few years. Families need some relief. We were ready to give them relief through that \$1,000 a year that we were going to give their sons and daughters to help pay for their tuition. That is what we need to do. We need to innovate. We need to encourage innovation. We encourage innovation by opening our universities to the broadest pool of minds possible.

There is another way to encourage innovation and that is to invest directly in research and development facilities. We have not encouraged basic research to the extent that we should if we want to be a leading nation in the international economy of the 21st century.

Do members know that the last Nobel Prize for Medicine Canada received was in 1923 and it went to Banting and Macleod for the discovery of insulin. That means there is something wrong. We are not innovating the way we should.

I would like to propose that we invest in something called the Canadian molecular biology laboratory, which is a concept that is being advocated by a McGill scholar and friend of mine Dr. John Bergeron, who has seen the model work in Europe. Europe has a molecular biology laboratory and it attracts the best minds from across the world to work on molecular biology science, which produces dividends in terms of drug discovery later on. That is particularly important to my constituency which houses a number of brand name pharmaceutical companies which could benefit from some spinoffs in the area of basic research and molecular biology.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to the order made on Monday, June 6, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt proceedings and to put forthwith all questions necessary to

The Budget

dispose of the amendment and the main motion now before the House.

• (1815)

[English]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1840)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 2)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothé
Boivin	Borg
Boulterice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brousseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dussault	Easter
Eyking	Freeman
Fry	Garncau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogubé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière

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Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	McLeod	Menegakis
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie	Menzies	Merrifield
Liu	MacAulay	Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mai	Marston	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Martin	Massé	Nicholson	Norlock
Mathyssen	May	O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
McCallum	McGuinty	Obhrai	Oliver
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud	Opitz	Paradis
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Payne	Penashue
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Plamondon	Poilevre
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair	Preston	Raitt
Murray	Nantel	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Nash	Nicholls	Reid	Rempel
Nuncz-Melo	Pacetti	Richards	Richardson
Papillon	Patry	Rickford	Ritz
Pécllet	Perreault	Saxton	Schellenberger
Pilon	Quach	Seebach	Shea
Rac	Rafferty	Shipley	Shory
Ravignat	Raynault	Smith	Sopuck
Roussseau	Saganash	Sorenson	Stanton
Sandhu	Savoie	Storseth	Strahl
Scarpaleggia	Sgro	Sweet	Tilson
Sims (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)		Toet	Toews
Sims (Newton—North Delta)		Trout	Trotter
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis	Truppe	Tweed
Stewart	Stoffer	Uppal	Valcourt
Sullivan	Thibeault	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Toone	Tremblay	Vellacott	Wallace
Trudeau	Turnel	Warawa	Warkentin
Valerioté — 131		Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bellavance	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooze	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Halifax—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Fortin
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Ilawn
Hayes	Jihibert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunnery
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman

McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oliver
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Plamondon	Poilevre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seebach	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trout	Trotter
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Yelich
Woodworth	Young (Vancouver South)
Young (Oakville)	
Zimmer — 167	

Nil

PAIRED**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

• (1850)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 3)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin

Baird
Bellavance
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooze
Calandra
Cannon
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Fast
Finlay (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hilleyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lee
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Ohinai
Opitz
Payne
Phamondan
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Scoback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vollacott
Warawa
Watson
Wiley Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 167

Bateman
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barric)
Hutt
Calkins
Carrichael
Chiu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Fortin
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mourani
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Paradis
Penashue
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trotter
Twed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver —Sunshine Coast —Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton

Angus
Atamanenko

The Budget

Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogue
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinity
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patri
Perreault
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Saganash
Savoie
Sgro
Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sisabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote — 131

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Adjournment Proceedings

* * *

*[English]***WAYS AND MEANS**

MOTION NO. 4

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC) moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget, as updated on June 6, 2011, be concurred in.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Pursuant to the order made on Thursday, June 9, 2011, the next vote will be on Motion No. 4, under ways and means proceedings.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1855)

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I requested these adjournment proceedings because I, and the people of London, would like to hear and have on record from the government the reason funding was denied to Diamond Aircraft.

I will quote the minister of state, in his response to my question last week. The minister stated:

After a thorough review of Diamond's request, the company was advised by this government that we could not support the request.

I would appreciate a more detailed answer and I would like the minister to explain to the people of London who lost their jobs why the government was unable to find money to lend to Diamond.

For the sake of clarity, I need to be sure that the minister of state has the details regarding Diamond Aircraft. It is a leading manufacturer of small planes and has operated a factory in London, Ontario, for almost 20 years. Diamond is an important contributing member of our community.

London's manufacturing sector has been hit hard during the recession with the collapse of the auto industry. In fact, the unemployment rate in London is the highest in the region. Diamond Aircraft was one of the few manufacturing employers left and our community needs to keep these jobs.

Diamond has completed the expensive and sophisticated research and development to launch its new D-JET, the next generation of private jets. The company already has an order for 240 D-JETs valued at \$400 million; \$20 million from the private sector and a \$35

million loan guarantee from the Ontario government. All that was required to go ahead with the project was the final piece: a loan from the federal government.

The loan application process has been lengthy and thorough. The initial request goes back to January 2009. There were many meetings, discussions and applications, both formal and informal, with ministers, staff and even the Prime Minister.

Sadly, the ultimate response was no.

The government missed a real opportunity to make Canada a leader in the aerospace industry and bring more jobs to a city that is hurting from the economic downturn. This investment would have saved jobs. Diamond was compelled to lay off 213 workers from its London facility. There was also a potential for 500 new jobs that would have helped revive the manufacturing sector in London. How can the government deny the chance to create good jobs?

It is important to reiterate that the loan guarantee was not a matter of the government cutting a cheque for \$35 million. The loan disburses progressively at about \$2 million per month over the next 18 months. This would allow the government to stop and cut losses at any time if unsatisfied with the program's progress. It is a fully repayable loan. It is not based on the success of the program. No matter what, Diamond would repay the money invested.

All those factors make it clear that this was a smart investment where everyone would benefit: the Government of Canada, the people of London and the Canadian aerospace industry.

Again, I would like to ask the minister and have him explain to the people of London who lost their jobs why the government was unable to find the money to lend to Diamond Aircraft.

• (1900)

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today about Canada's aerospace industry and the importance this government places on this critical sector.

The aerospace industry is a cornerstone of the Canadian economy. In 2009 alone, Canada's aerospace industry recorded sales totalling over \$22 billion, ranking it among the world's top five aerospace sectors.

While the economic slowdown undoubtedly challenged Canada's important aerospace industry, the government ensured that the right tools were in place to support this vital contributor to the economies of all regions of Canada, and we continue to do so.

Investing in innovation and creating new business opportunities for Canadian aerospace firms today will ensure that Canada is well positioned to full take advantage of tomorrow's opportunities.

The Government of Canada works closely with the Canadian aerospace industry in its pursuit of innovation and enhanced competitiveness. For instance, there are many benefits provided to industry through the Government of Canada's industrial and regional benefits policy, which leverages defence procurements to provide high value opportunities for Canada's aerospace industry now and for years to come.

Thanks to the federal government's investments to rebuild the Canadian Forces, aerospace and defence contractors hold obligations to invest approximately \$20 billion in Canada. In July 2010, the Government of Canada announced its commitment to replace the existing fleet of CF-18 fighters with 65 F-35 Lightning II aircraft. The F-35 joint strike fighter program represents a unique opportunity for Canadian industry. Canada's participation positions our companies at the start of a multi-year, multi-billion dollar program where they will contribute to the development, production and sustainment of this highly advanced fifth generation fighter. Canadian companies have access to significant opportunities related to the production of the F-35, with more to come on sustainment.

In April 2007, the government created the strategic aerospace and defence initiative to support the vital research and development investments made by Canadian aerospace firms. To date, we have announced more than \$800 million of repayable investments in 23 projects. With these funds, we have leveraged an additional \$1.8 billion in research and development investments.

Five firms are already commercializing new technologies as a result of this program. It was through the strategic aerospace and defence initiative that the Government of Canada initially invested close to \$20 million in Diamond's D-Jet project. This funding was awarded to Diamond to directly support its research and development efforts for this all new aircraft.

Diamond has since approached the government with additional financial requests, including a request for an additional \$35 million loan. After a thorough review of Diamond's request by Industry Canada experts, the company was advised that the government, as the steward of taxpayer dollars, could not support the request. However, I am pleased to note that company officials have indicated that they continue to explore other financing opportunities to support Diamond's D-Jet project.

The government remains focused on what matters to Canadians, the economy. Our continued economic growth shows that Canada's economic action plan is working and that we are on the right track. Canada's economy has now grown for seven straight quarters, with over 560,000 net new jobs created since July 2009. While that is positive news, the global economic recovery remains fragile. We need to stay the course with our prudent low tax plan to protect the economy and create jobs.

• (1905)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the decision by this government has been catastrophic for the workers, the families, the community of London and the advancement of the aerospace industry in Canada. Highly qualified technicians have been forced to leave London for the United States. The people of London have a right to know the reasons this loan was denied.

Adjournment Proceedings

This government can spend \$30 billion in a blink of an eye to invest in the American aerospace industry. At the same time, it denied funding to a Canadian company while making unconvincing arguments about prudent spending.

The loan disbursement amounts are not much more than the loss of income tax revenues and the unemployment insurance costs associated with the layoffs. There was opportunity here to increase tax revenue and create more jobs. How can this government call its actions fiscally responsible?

Again, will the minister outline exactly why the funding was denied?

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, of course, I have already spoken to that question. Let me turn to the many positive investments this government has made in the city of London, thanks to the efforts of my colleagues from London West, Elgin—Middlesex—London, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and my new colleague representing London North Centre.

Our government's investments include a new cargo terminal at the London International Airport, expanded research and teaching facilities at Fanshawe College and the University of Western Ontario, important road improvements throughout the London area and new affordable housing for seniors in the London area.

Because of our investments and low tax plan to create jobs and spur growth, the future for the people of Canada and the people of London has never looked brighter. Here again, I will reiterate the fact that our plan has created over 560,000 net new jobs across Canada since July 2009.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had asked the human resources minister a question here in the House. In 2009, crab quotas were 20,000 tons or more, which gave my region a crab fishing season that lasted eight weeks. In fishing, there are all kinds of species, including crab, lobster, herring and so on. That many weeks allows plant workers to accumulate enough hours to be eligible for employment insurance. However, in 2010, on the advice of biologists, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans decided to reduce quotas to about 7,800 metric tonnes. That reduced the number of work weeks from eight to four. Since the workers had accumulated enough hours the previous year, it was not the end of the world. But this year, the biomass has increased by about 17%.

Adjournment Proceedings

The then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans—who is now a minister—had increased the quotas to 8,700 metric tonnes, which provided just four weeks of work for the plant workers, the majority of whom are women. At the time, I had asked the minister whether she would be prepared to work with the province of New Brunswick on implementing a program to help those people. This could be through community programs or something else to help the people in these communities to be eligible for employment insurance, unless the government wants them to go on welfare.

The programs that would send people from northeastern New Brunswick and the Acadian Peninsula to work in Cap-Pelé or in Bouctouche are not the answer. The government needs to realize that many of these people are single mothers. They are not interested in leaving two children behind to go work in Cap-Pelé. We need projects in the region, back home, to help people get through the crisis in the fishery. The crisis in the crab fishery comes in cycles; the quotas go up and down. Currently, the biomass is on the rise. Let us hope this will be settled in a few years.

The minister told them to turn to the province, which was receiving money from the federal government and it was up to the province to solve its problems. It is the same amount of money the province received in the two or three previous years. There is a shortfall for the province. I am again asking the minister to help the province of New Brunswick implement programs to help the plant workers, because we do not want them to go on welfare. We want them to be proud and to have work. I am asking the minister to intervene immediately.

• (1910)

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member for Acadie—Bathurst about his concerns regarding the provisions of employment insurance benefits to fish plant workers who may be affected by the quota for snow crab this year. In particular, he notes there is danger that plant workers will not have accumulated sufficient hours to qualify for EI regular benefits.

We are accountable to employers and workers who pay the EI premiums that support the program. As the hon. member knows, EI is an insurance-based program. Employers and workers pay premiums so that employees may collect benefits if they are unable to work, are temporarily unemployed, sick, pregnant, caring for a newborn or a newly adopted child, or provide care or support to a gravely ill family member.

Under the eligibility requirements for EI, workers receive benefits only if they have contributed to the program by paying premiums in the past year and if they meet qualifying and entitlement conditions. Workers can qualify for EI regular benefits with as little as 420 hours, depending on the unemployment rate in their regions.

Of course, I sympathize with those workers who may not be able to accumulate sufficient hours to qualify for EI regular benefits. However, removal of the eligibility requirements or qualifying conditions, even for those individuals with extenuating personal circumstances, would be inconsistent with the role of the EI Act and would change the nature of the program.

Let me also point out that the EI program responds to local market changes, taking into account the difficulty of finding employment. The EI program divides the country into 58 economic regions intended to reflect areas of similar labour market conditions. The unemployment rate for each region is used to determine the number of hours a person residing in that region needs to qualify for EI and the number of weeks payable.

Through the variable entrance requirement, the number of insurable hours needed to qualify for EI benefits and the duration of benefits varies depending on the unemployment rate of the EI economic region in which the individual lives. When a region's unemployment rate rises, the entrance requirements reduce and the duration of benefits increase.

For example, in the hon. member's economic region of Restigouche—Albert, the current number of insured hours required to qualify for EI regular benefits is 420, which represents the minimum number of hours to qualify for regular benefits, providing the maximum compensation allowed under the program. Simply put, the conditions in the member's riding are the most generous of any region in the country.

The government also provides funding to provinces and territories to help people find work through continued education. The EI Act already includes provisions that allow the provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec to provide income support to workers affected by the crab quota and who wish to take long-term training.

EI claimants who have exhausted part I benefits are eligible to participate in EI part II training for up to three years and can receive income support while doing so.

Both New Brunswick and Quebec have received substantial ongoing funding within their labour market development agreements and labour market arrangements. The flexibility of this funding allows us to adjust the priorities and spending to respond to the impact of the snow crab quota.

Furthermore, the funding provided through labour market agreements to the provinces and territories have helped Canadians who are not eligible for EI benefits or are under-represented in the labour market train for better jobs.

Service Canada will work with the provincial officials to provide information and to help individuals and communities as necessary, and our government will continue to be accountable to workers, employers and Canadian taxpayers.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has just said that the Conservative government is completely washing its hands of this problem. That is what the Conservatives are telling us. This crisis is happening in our region under the watch of the federal government, which was responsible for managing the fishery.

I am familiar with this program and I know that employment insurance is there to help workers who have lost their jobs. However, what the parliamentary secretary is not saying is that the Liberals and the Conservatives stole \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund and were not shy about using this money to eliminate the deficit.

However, when it comes time to help the men and women who have lost their jobs because of the mismanagement of the fishery, the government is saying that there is no money allocated for that. Come on. That is why the employment insurance fund was established: to help workers who have lost their jobs and are in difficulty.

I suggest that the federal government stop washing its hands of this problem and start doing something for these people who are working and who want to live with some dignity—

• (1915)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, our government has provided unprecedented investments in training to get Canadians back to work. Our government has invested over \$4 billion in training which has helped 1.2 million Canadians find new jobs.

We have provided significant additional funding under the targeted initiative for older workers in both New Brunswick and Quebec. New Brunswick has received \$2 million and Quebec \$13 million to help unemployed older workers in vulnerable communities.

As I stated earlier, the EI system provides the most generous conditions possible for the member's riding.

We continue to encourage further training and education as a means of increasing employment for all Canadians.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment. I wish you all the best in this endeavour.

I also want to convey my best wishes to the member for Ajax—Pickering and congratulate him on his appointment as a parliamentary secretary. He will soon learn that doing late shows is probably one of the least attractive aspects of the job, because for the next four minutes he has to tell the House why he is not answering the question that the minister only took 30 seconds to not answer. I wish him well in his responses and look forward to working with him over the course of the next few years.

I had a very simple question for the minister, which he did not answer. I asked him how much it was going to cost to close Camp Mirage and how much it was going to cost to open the Kuwait base.

Adjournment Proceedings

The minister said that my figures of \$300 million were grossly exaggerated, so I simply asked him what is the number and thus far we do not know. Hopefully in the realm of time the parliamentary secretary will actually tell us the cost of closing Camp Mirage and then opening Kuwait. It does open up a larger series of questions with respect to the government's plans for opening all of the other bases.

We read in the press that the government is proposing to open bases in Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, Singapore and South Korea. It has already concluded deals with Jamaica and Germany and is working on the deal with Kuwait. None of these things one would imagine is cheap. It is not only the cost of opening the base, but it is the cost of maintaining the base.

This also begs the question, what are we doing in all of these countries if it is for no other reason than to have refueling stops around the world? Bases are not opened for no reason at all. It would lead one to the question of what are the government's plans with respect to opening bases all over the world?

I am looking forward to the response from the hon. parliamentary secretary. I hope that his response will be somewhat more forthcoming than the minister's response. I wonder if he could actually tell us the cost of closing Camp Mirage and opening Kuwait. In the fullness of time, could he possibly tell us how much he anticipates that the military would be spending on the opening of all of these other bases as well?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood for his interest in these matters. Our ridings are almost neighbours along the coast of Lake Ontario.

On this issue, as on many others, we have a common and shared deep interest.

The hon. member is asking for additional information on a matter that is under negotiation and that is the logistical arrangements being put in place to support the end of the Canadian Forces combat mission and the transition to a Canadian Forces training mission in Afghanistan that will last until 2014.

I am confident that the hon. member would not want the details of a negotiation still under way to be divulged to the House at a time that might adversely affect the result of those negotiations. So I am not in a position to give more detail with regard to the cost of the aspect of the mission that the member has asked about until those plans are finalized.

However, I can assure the hon. member that the closure of Camp Mirage has not had any adverse impact on our mission in Afghanistan.

• (1920)

[Translation]

Since Camp Mirage closed, the Canadian Forces have been able to pursue their combat operations and support the preparations for the new training mission. These operations are receiving a great deal of support, and this will not change.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

They are supported through a number of locations in Canada and overseas that depend on routes through the air, on the sea and on land, and are not dependent on any single supply line.

The Canadian Forces are continuously seeking, as the member well knows, new ways to be more agile, efficient, and cost effective in meeting humanitarian and other challenges requiring their involvement. In this respect, the acquisition of the C-17 transport aircraft has already made our Canadian forces more effective and responsive. The training mission to assist in NATO's training of the Afghan national security forces until 2014 will be effectively supported as well.

We are there with over 60 nations and international organizations as part of a UN-mandated NATO-led mission.

[Translation]

We are implementing a government-wide response that includes aspects related to the military, diplomacy, correctional services, development and civil defence.

[English]

This effort is delivering real results and making a positive difference to the lives of Afghan citizens across the country. Of course, it involves a level of commitment that does carry significant costs.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada has always been open and transparent about costs. We have committed to submitting reports on the cost of the mission to Canadians and to Parliament on a regular basis.

[English]

That is what we have done to this point and we will continue to do so. The costs associated with the mission close-out will be communicated when they are fully known in an appropriate fashion. In the meantime, our Canadian Forces continue work at which they excel, providing security to Afghans and supporting the development of effective and capable Afghan national security forces.

As part of prudent military logistics, planning for the transition of our combat mission to our Afghan and NATO allies is well in hand.

[Translation]

In accordance with the parliamentary motion adopted in 2008, the combat mission in Kandahar will end by the end of July 2011, and all Canadian Forces personnel will leave the Kandahar region by the

end of 2011. Thus, Canada's military mission in Afghanistan will shift to a non-combat training mission.

[English]

This role is vital: the continuing development of well-led, well-trained, and well-equipped Afghan national security forces. That is what will help the government of Afghanistan assume increasing responsibility for Afghan security.

Hon. John McKay: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a quick read. I congratulate him on his non-answer. It was quite amusing to me to hear him say, "We are an open and transparent government, but we cannot tell you anything". Then he went on to talk about C-17s, the whole of government approach, what we are doing or not doing in Afghanistan, et cetera, none of which had anything to do with the actual simple question, which was how much this is going to cost.

I take the view that the hon. member or those he represents actually know the cost, that it is not actually a point of negotiation, and that these costs are concluded. The only point of negotiation would be the issue of whether there is some possibility that Camp Mirage could still continue to exist. Clearly that does not, so the costs have to be known, and there is no reason they cannot be communicated to the House.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the member really does test this point to its very limit in suggesting that costs were never revealed at earlier stages of this mission when his party was the government of Canada and when in fact this member for Ajax—Pickering was Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan until a negotiation had resulted in an agreement and the agreement met the criteria set by the House and the Government of Canada for an operational purpose being pursued in support of a mission in Afghanistan.

I can say in all good conscience that of all the nations contributing militarily to the mission in Afghanistan, the Government of Canada remains among the very most transparent in revealing costs in a timely manner.

• (1925)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:25 p.m.)

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